



THOR



Arachnea

ROSINSKI - VAN HAMME



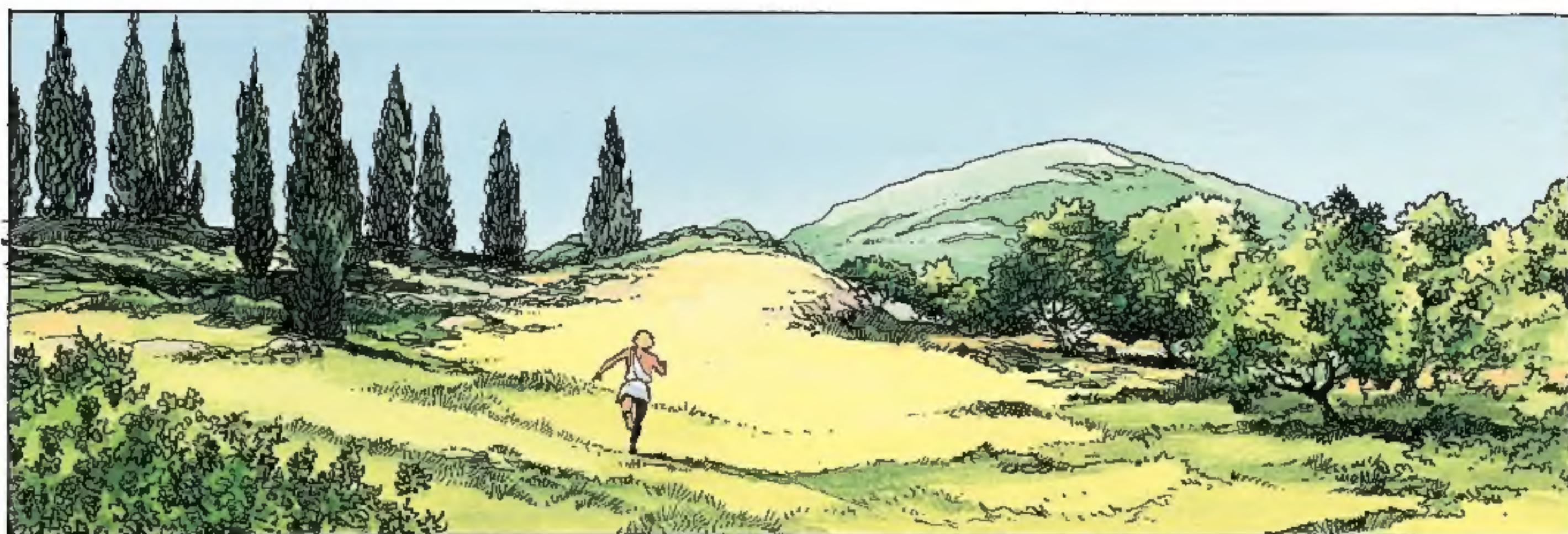
ROSINSKI-VAN HAMME

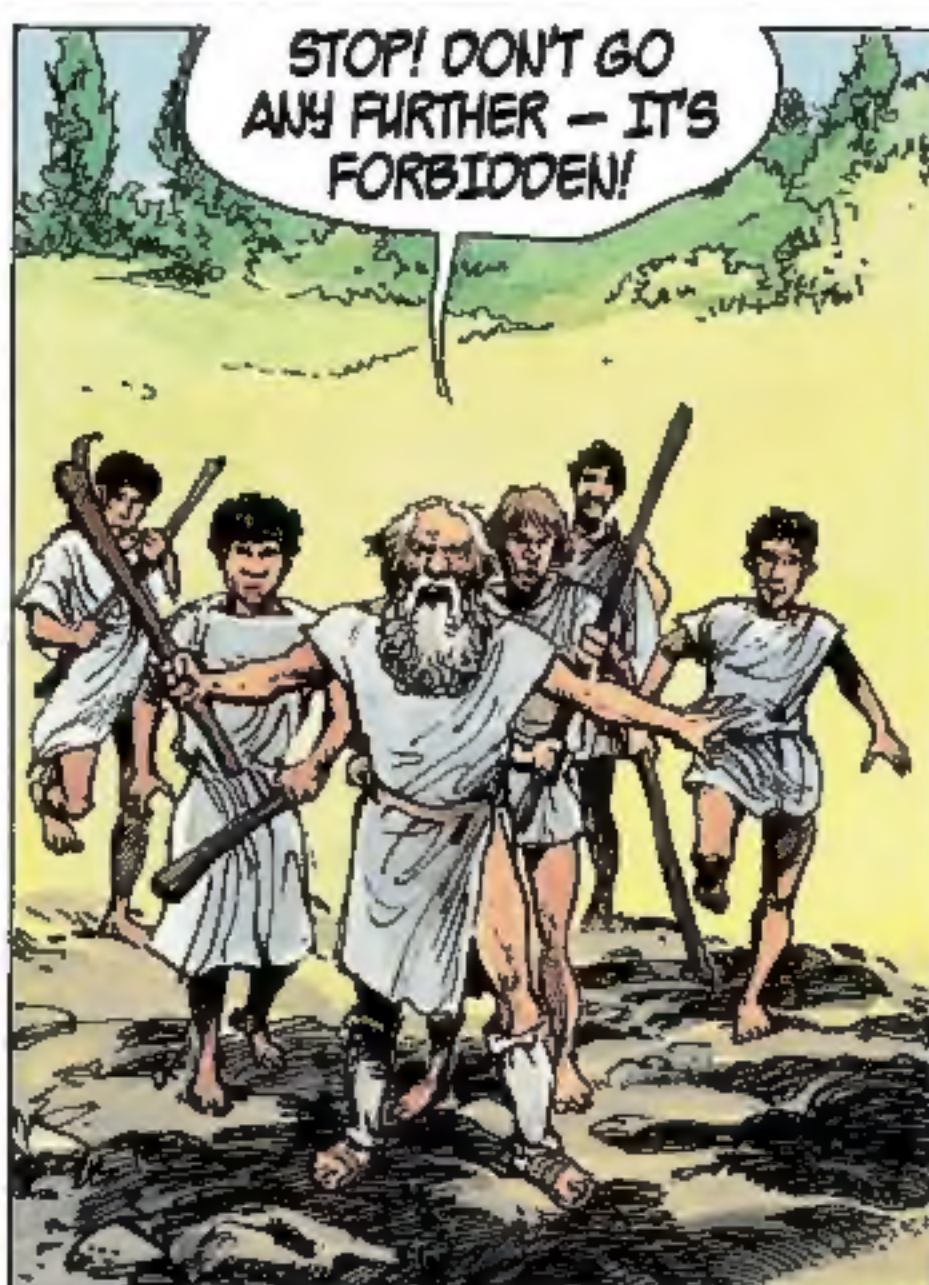
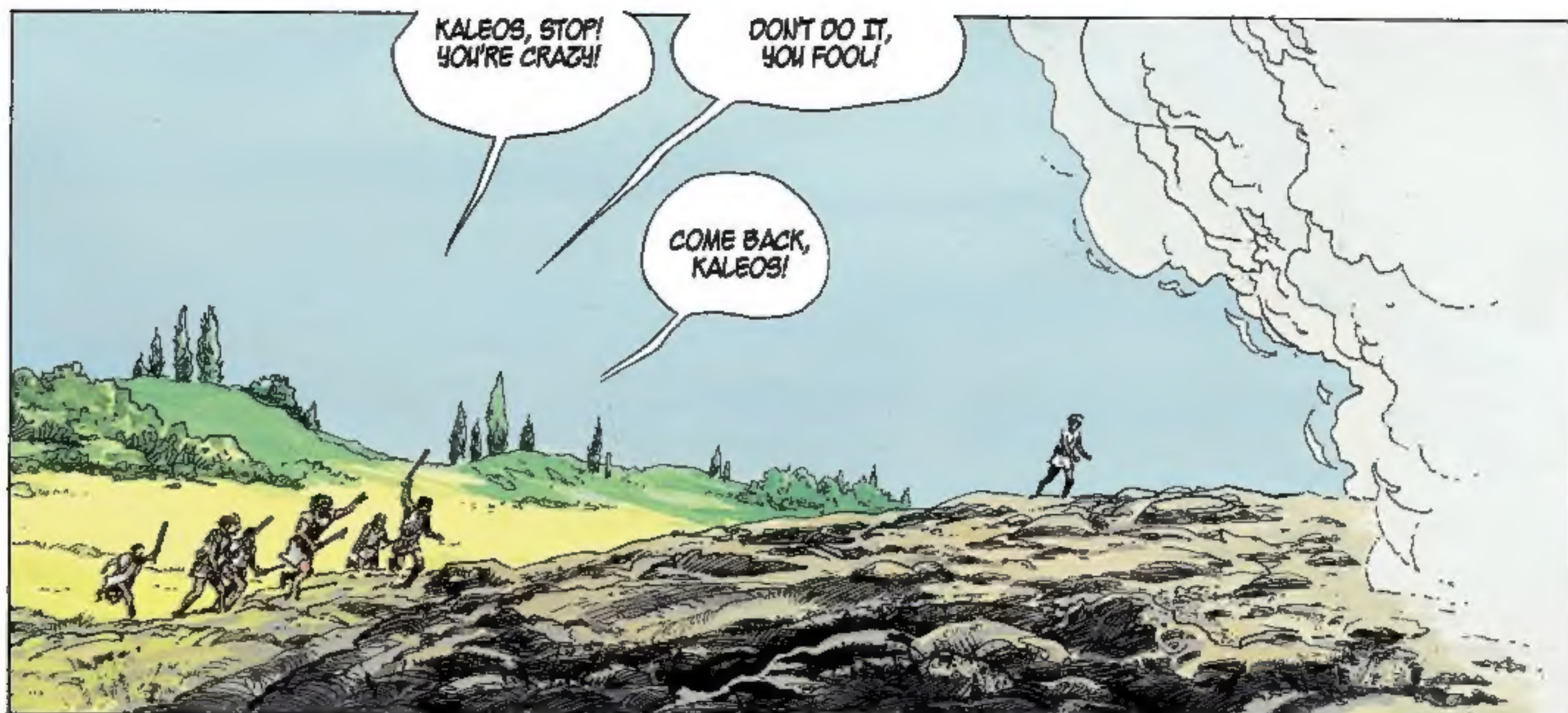
THORNGAL

Arachnea



Colours: GRAZA







THE SEA IS GETTING
ROUGH. WE'RE IN FOR
A STORM.

I'M AFRAID SO,
AND IT'LL BE UPON
US IN A FEW
MINUTES.



NO CHOICE — WE'LL HAVE TO
ABANDON THE OTHER BOAT.
WE CAN'T MANOEUVRE WITH
IT IN TOW. TAKE THE
TILLER, AARICIA.



HO, BOYS! COME OVER TO
US QUICKLY. I HAVE TO CUT THE
ROPE BEFORE THE STORM
HITS US!

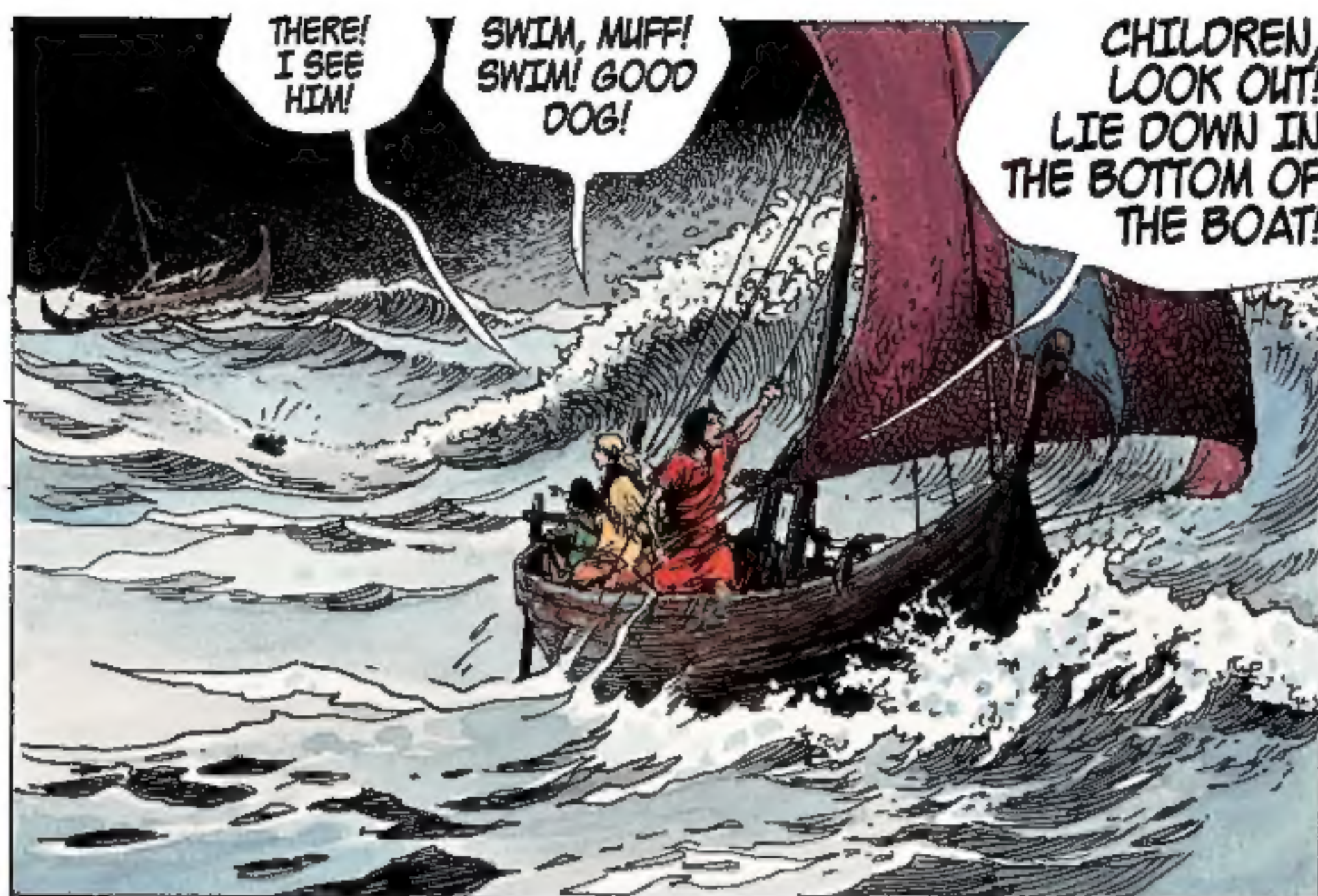
AND
MUFF?



HE'LL SWIM. COME
ON, HURRY.



MUFF?...
WHERE'S
MUFF?...



THERE!
I SEE
HIM!

SWIM, MUFF!
SWIM! GOOD
DOG!

CHILDREN,
LOOK OUT!
LIE DOWN IN
THE BOTTOM OF
THE BOAT!



WOLFCUB!!...

AAAH
AAAH
AAAH



WOLFCUB!!...

STAY AT THE TILLER,
AARICIA. I'LL GET
HER. JOLAN, DAREK,
LOWER THE SAIL!...

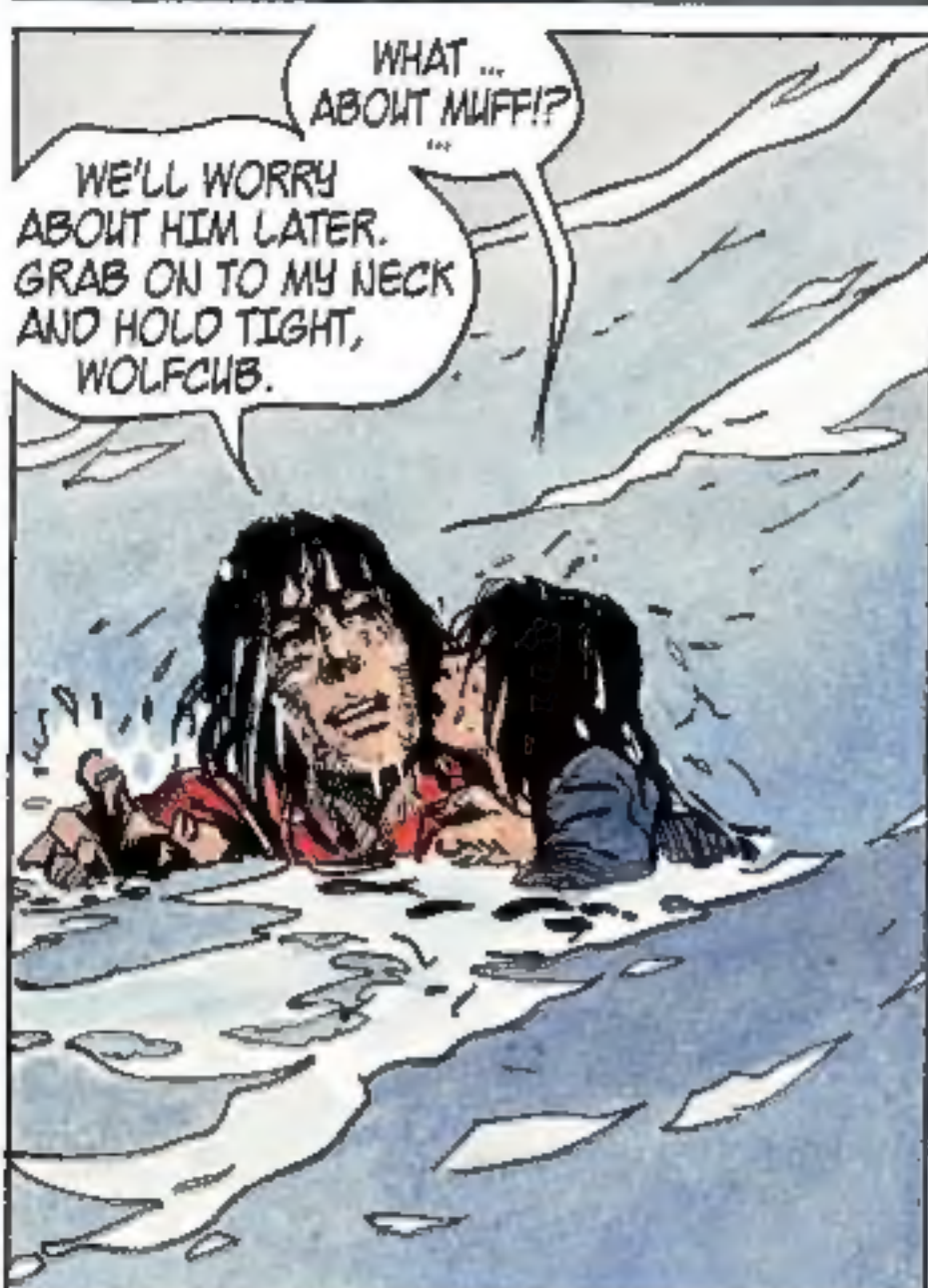


WE'LL CATCH UP
TO YOU IN THE OTHER
BOAT.



THORGAL!
HELP!

I'M COMING,
SWEETHEART!
HOLD ON!

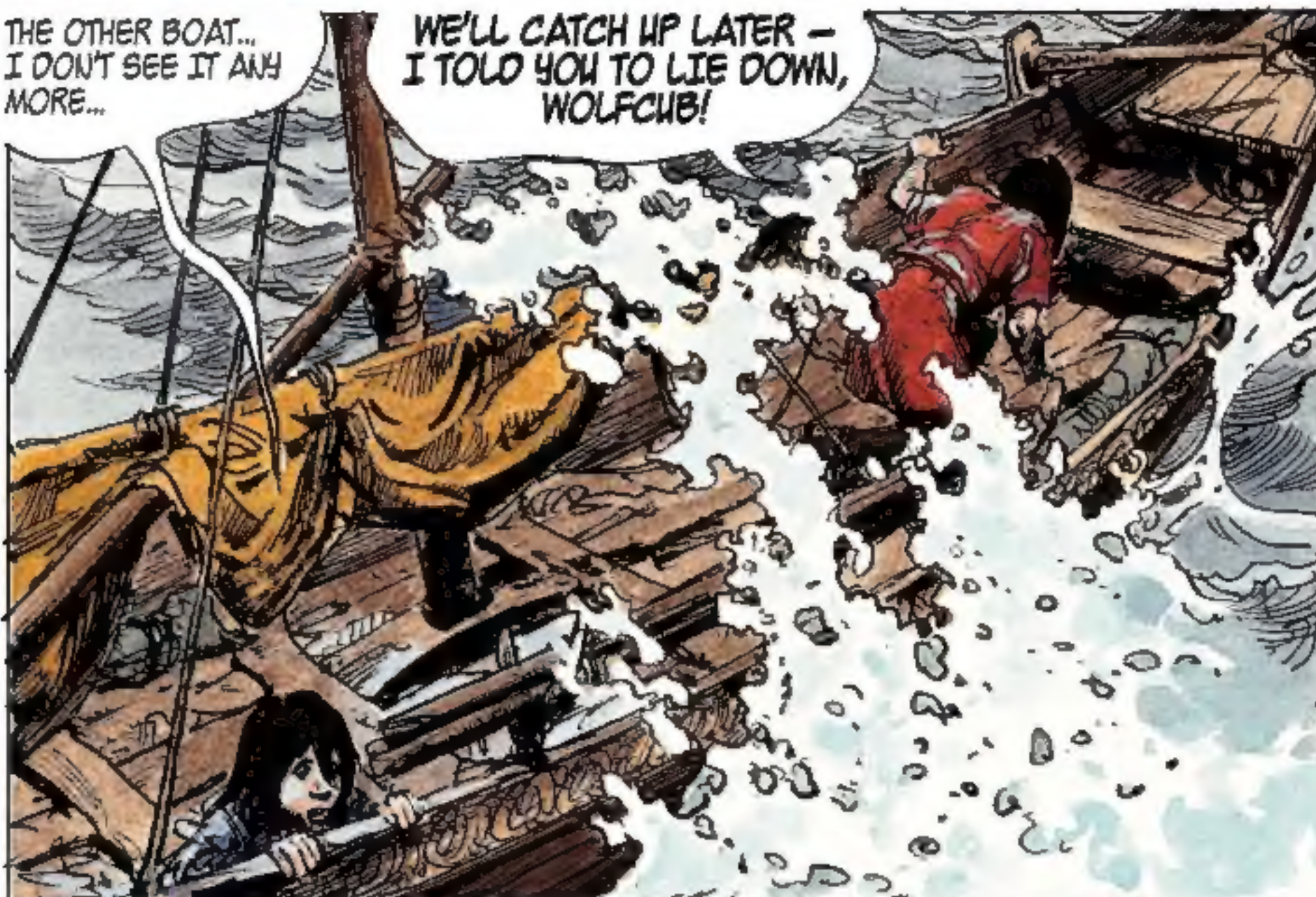


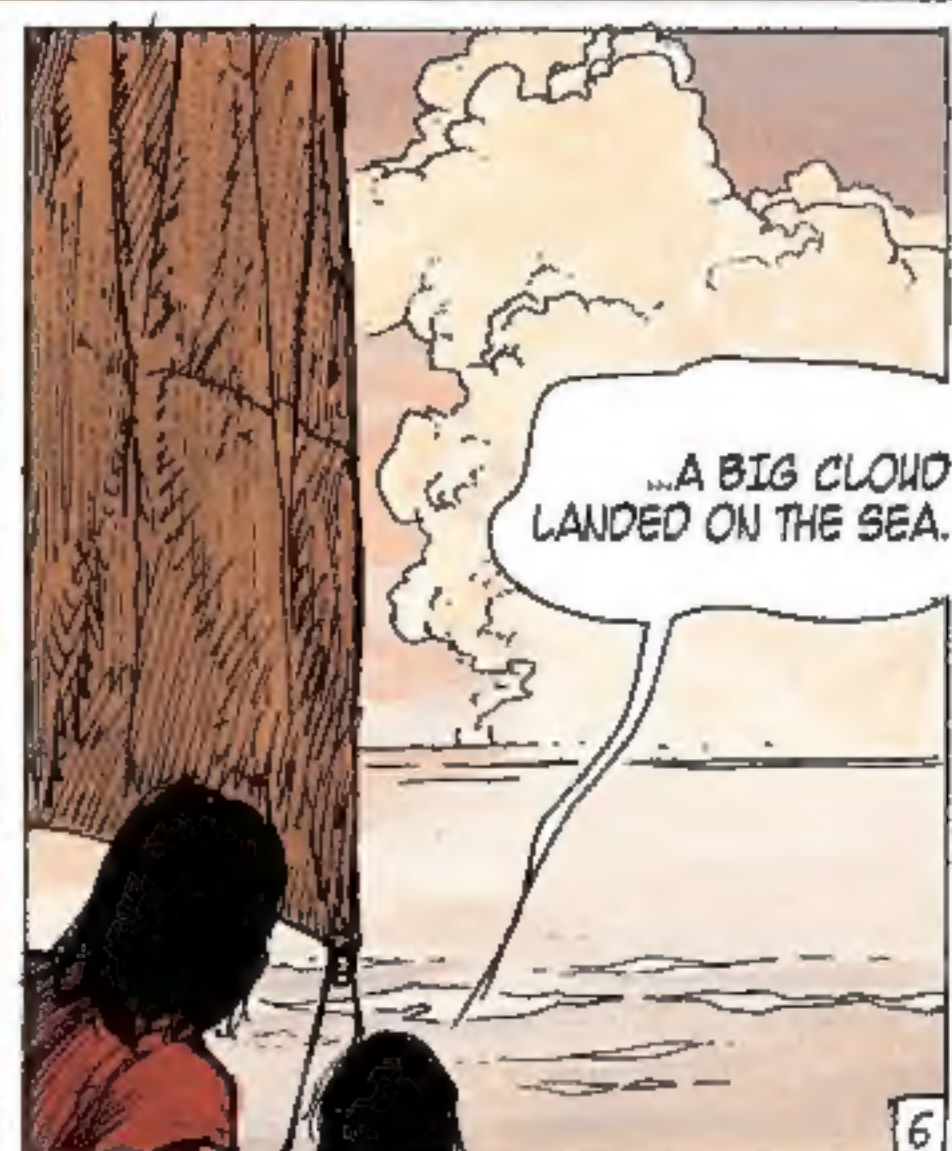
WHAT ...
ABOUT MUFF?

WE'LL WORRY
ABOUT HIM LATER.
GRAB ON TO MY NECK
AND HOLD TIGHT,
WOLFCUB.



4







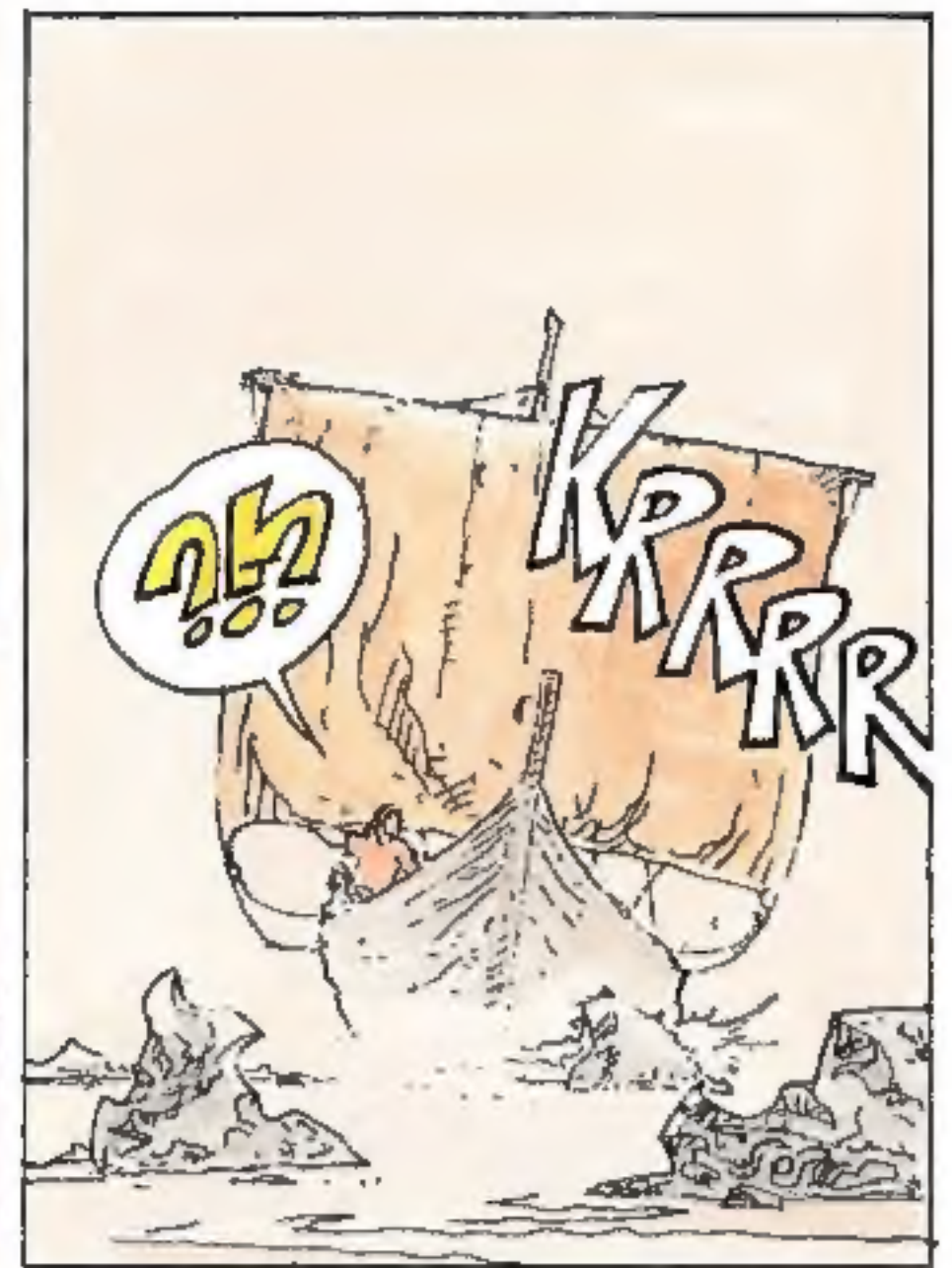
ARE WE GOING INTO THE CLOUD?

I'D RATHER AVOID IT, BUT THE CURRENT IS TAKING US STRAIGHT INTO IT.



OH! LOOK HOW PRETTY IT IS!

HMM... LET'S HOPE THIS FOG BANK ISN'T TOO LARGE.



!!

KRRR



REEFS! WE MUST BE NEAR LAND! BETWEEN THE FOG AND THE CURRENT, THOUGH, I HAVE NO WAY TO STEER...



THORGAAAL...

??

KKRRRAAK



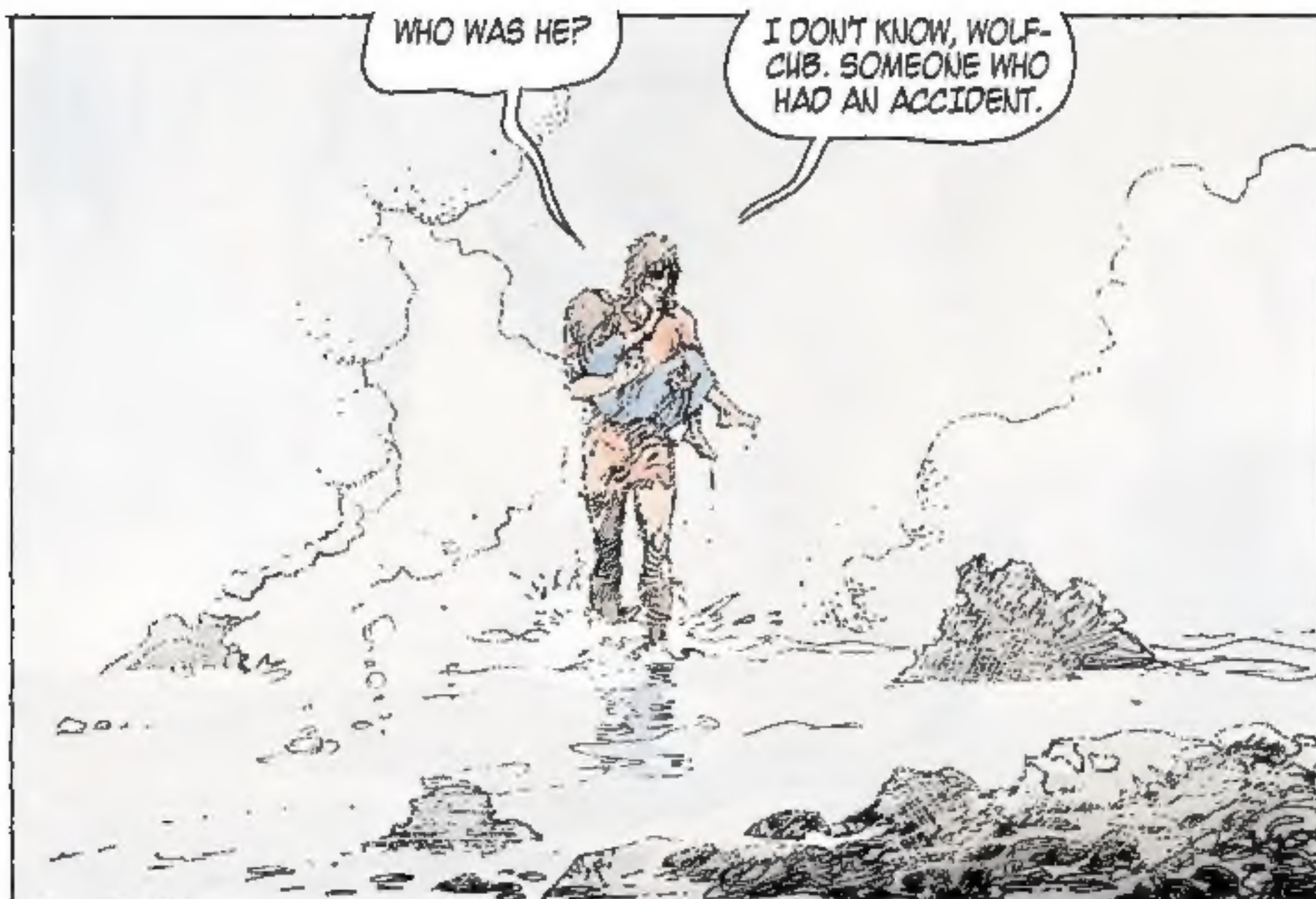
IT'S ALL RIGHT, SWEETHEART. HOLD ON TO ME. THE SHORE CAN'T BE FAR.



THORGAL! THERE!...



!!



WHO WAS HE?

I DON'T KNOW, WOLF-
CHUB. SOMEONE WHO
HAD AN ACCIDENT.



HE MUST HAVE
FALLEN FROM THE
TOP OF THIS CLIFF
HERE. AT LEAST
IT SHOWS THE
COAST IS
INHABITED.

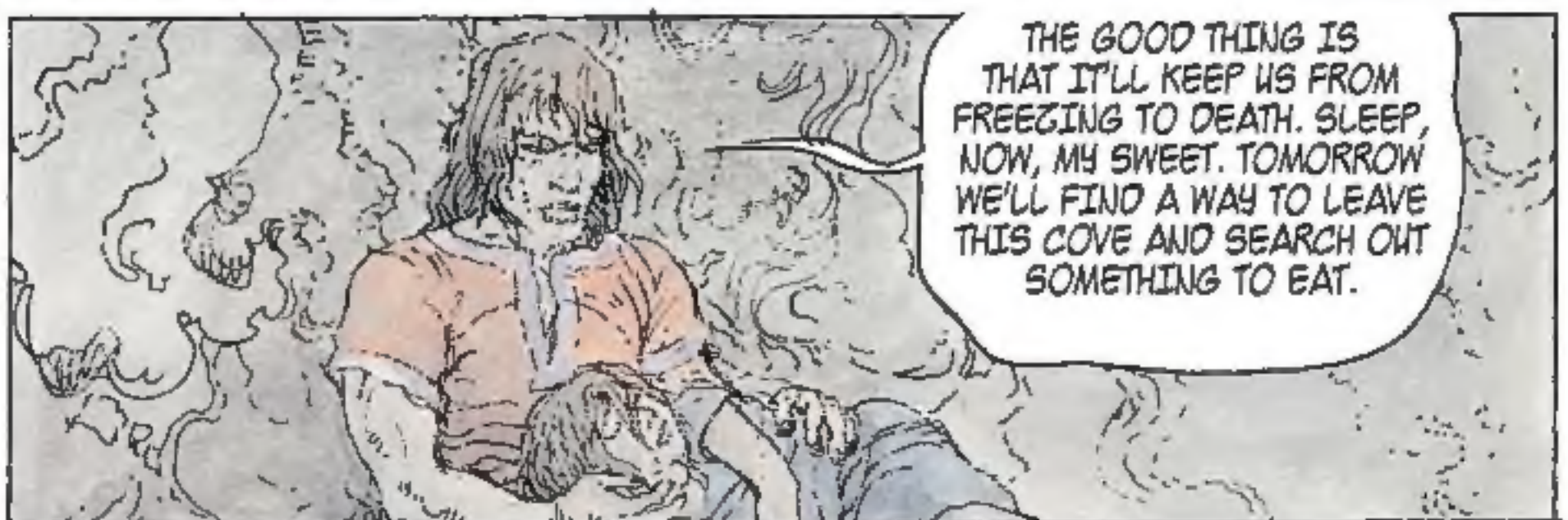
BUT THERE'S NOTHING
MORE WE CAN DO
TODAY. NIGHT IS
COMING.



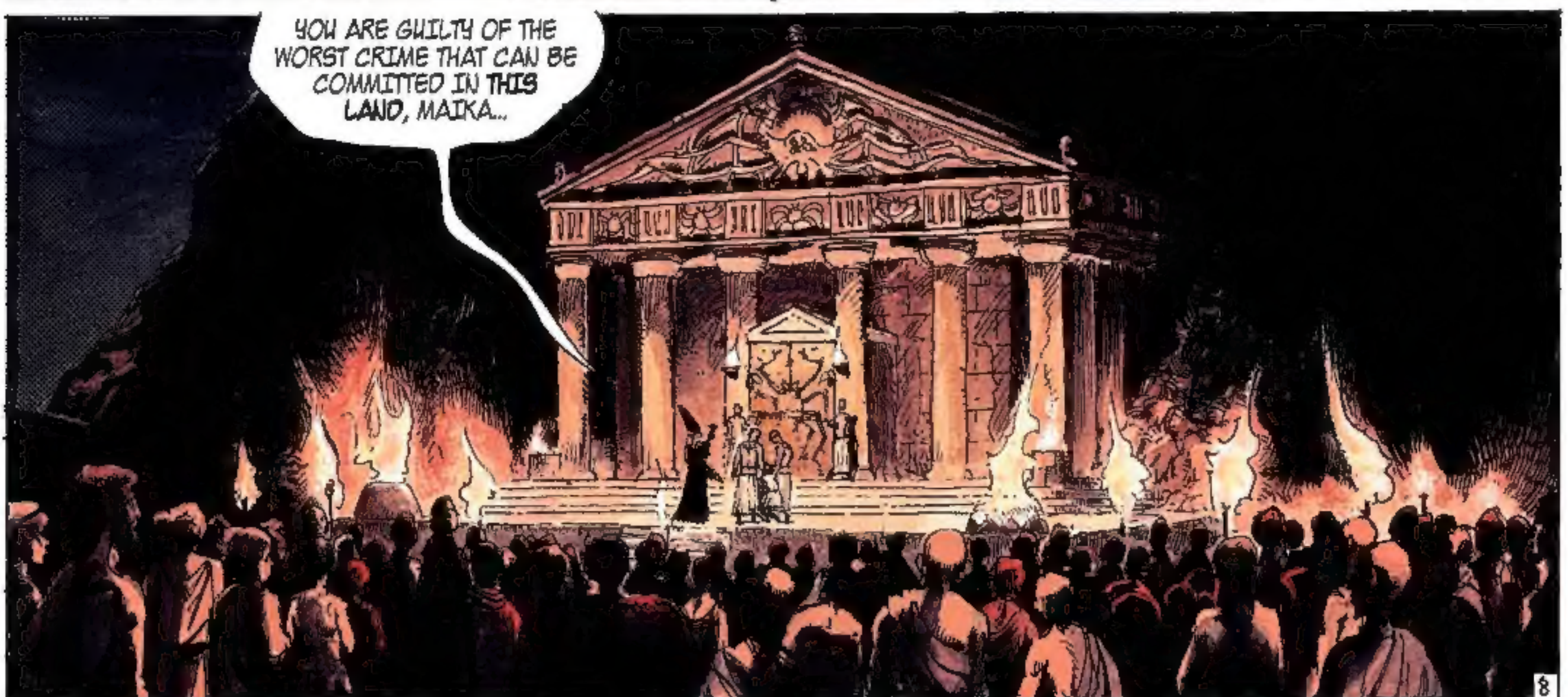
THORGAL, DID YOU
FEEL HOW HOT THE
SEA WAS?



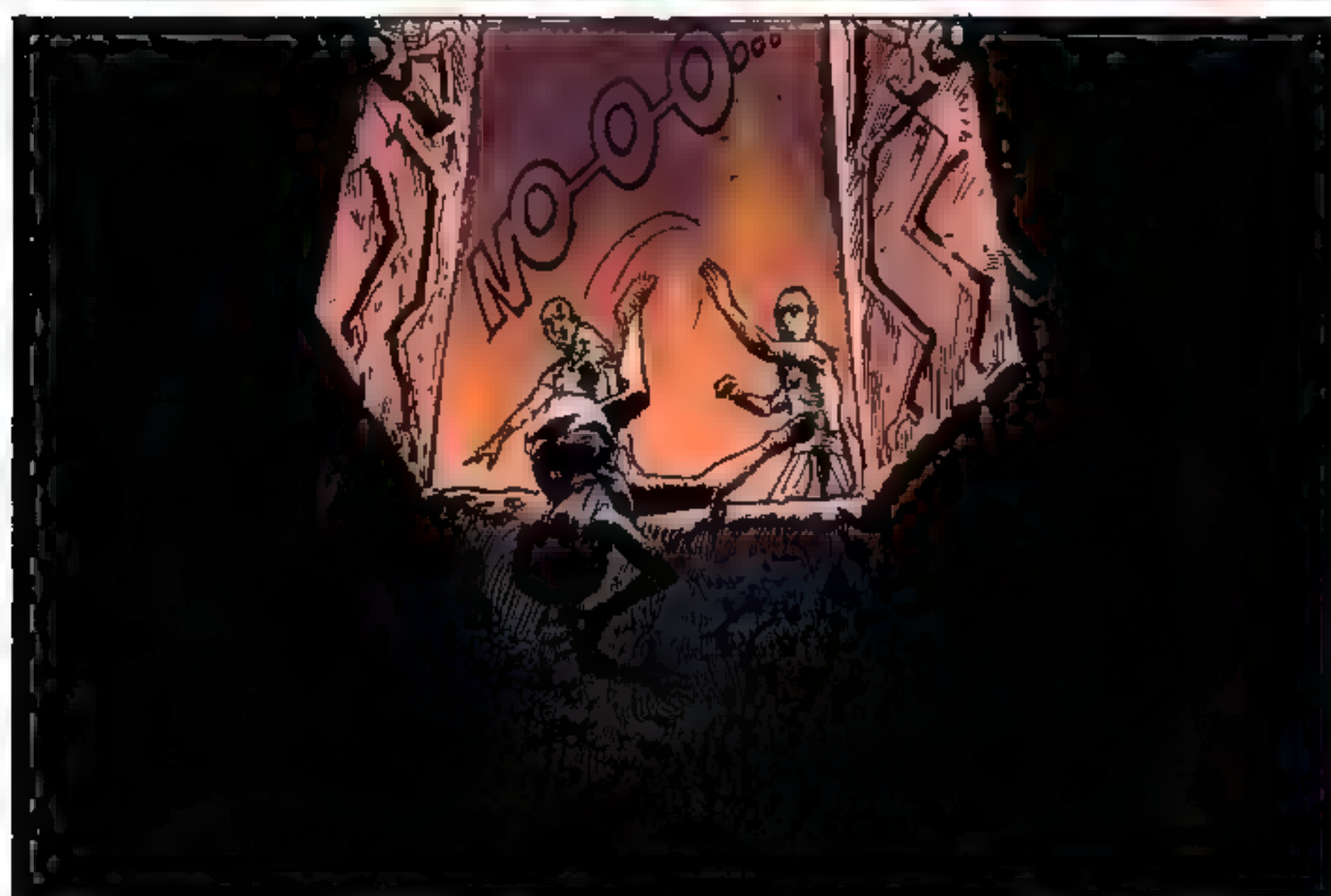
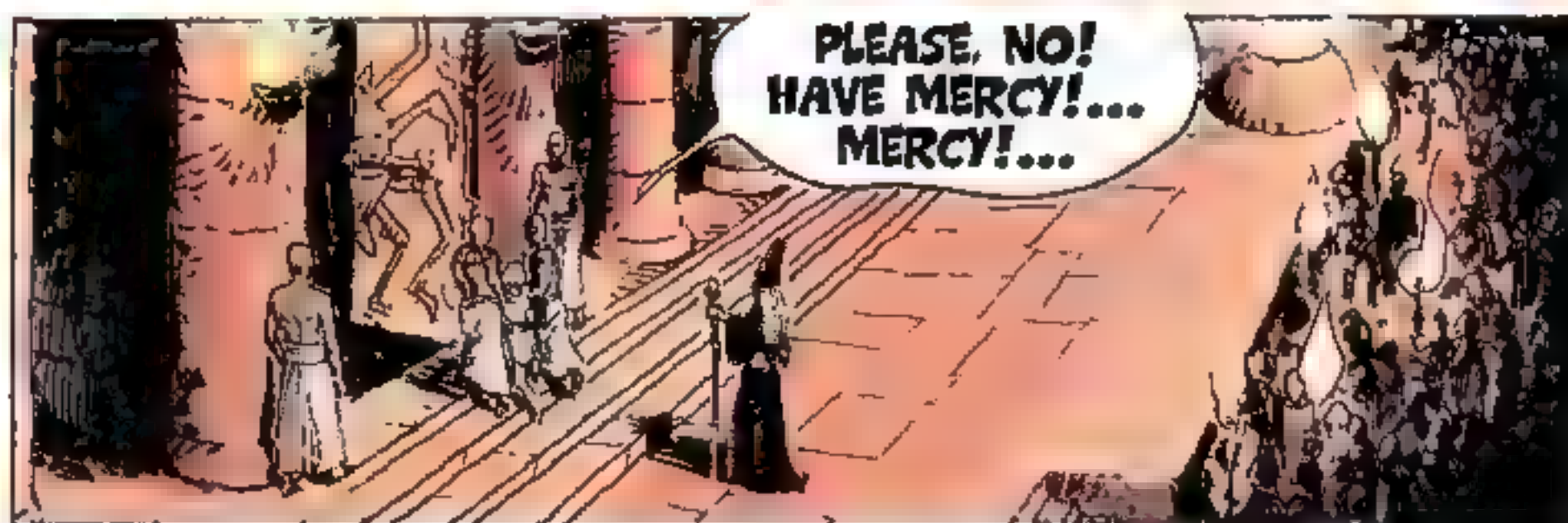
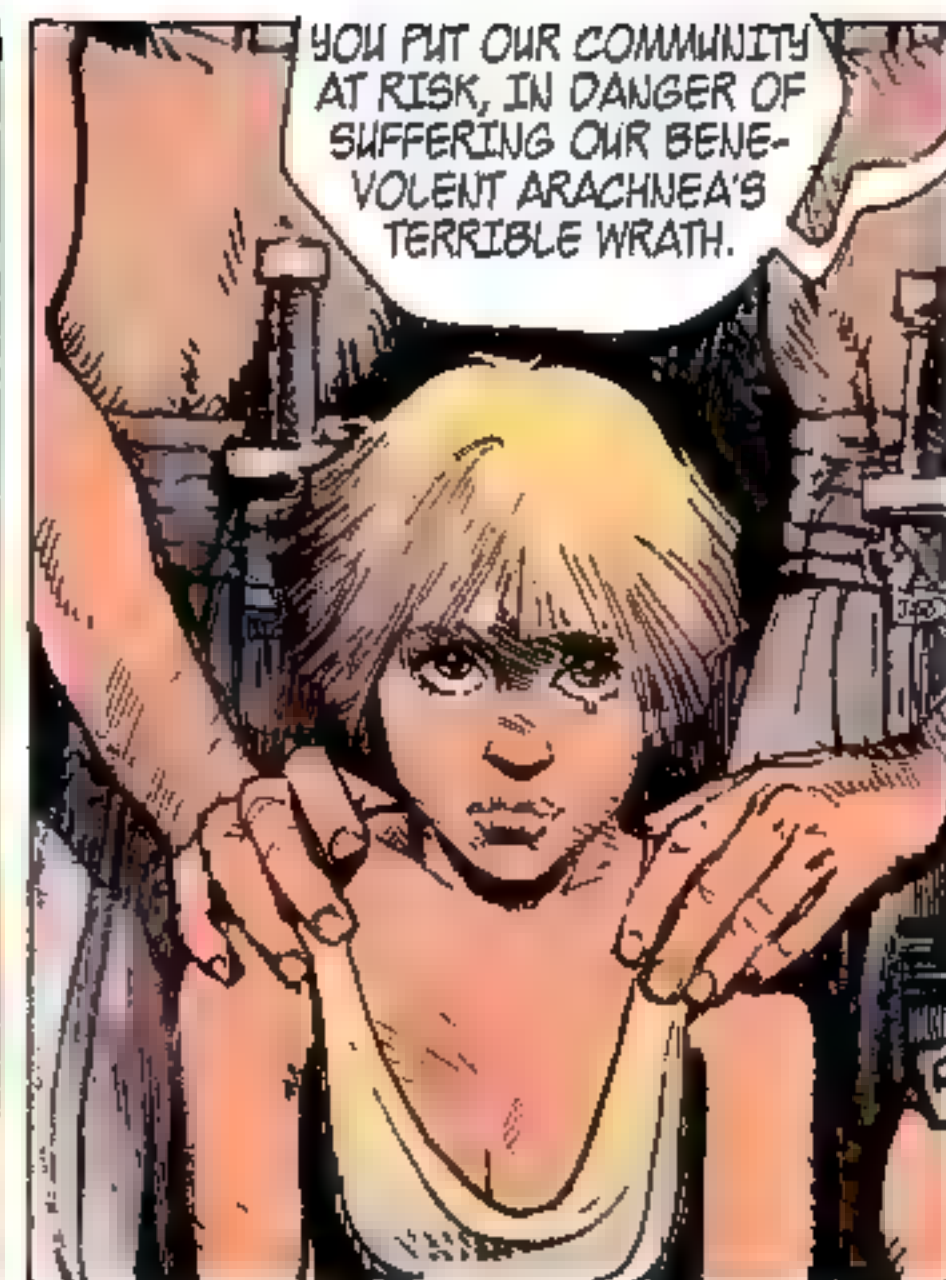
I DID. IT'S STRANGE...
IT PROBABLY EXPLAINS THE
FOG BANK. IT'S NOT FOG -
IT'S STEAM RISING FROM
THE SURFACE.

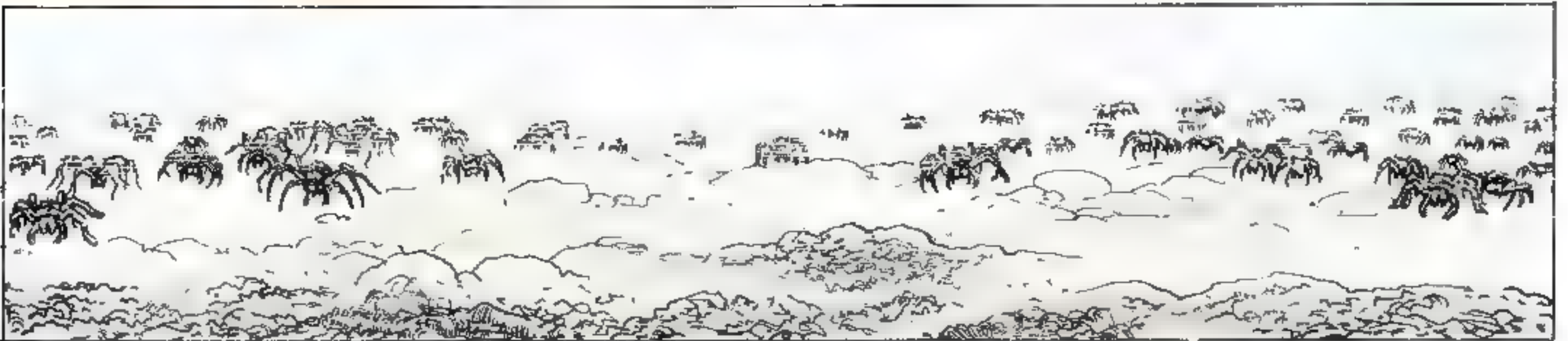
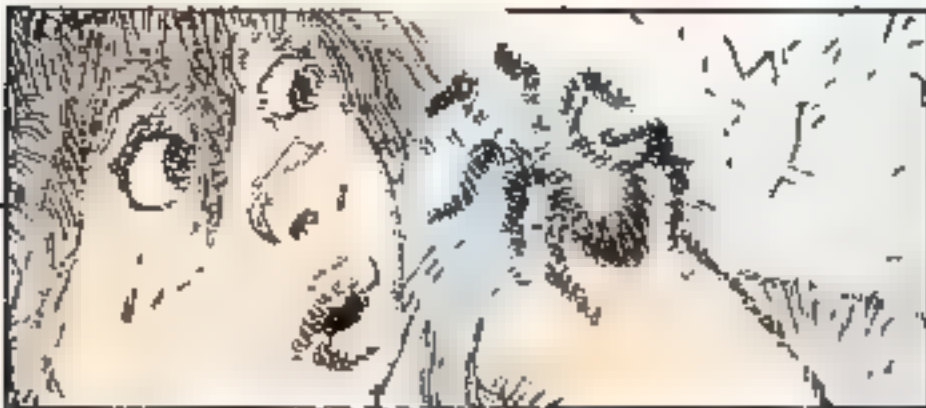
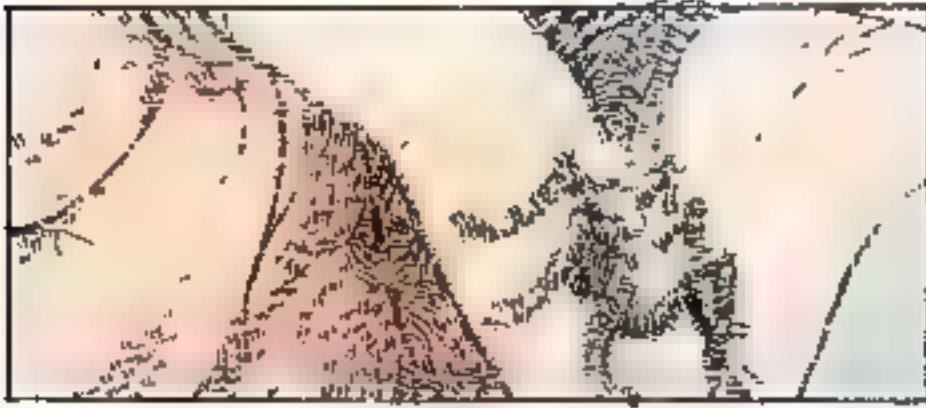
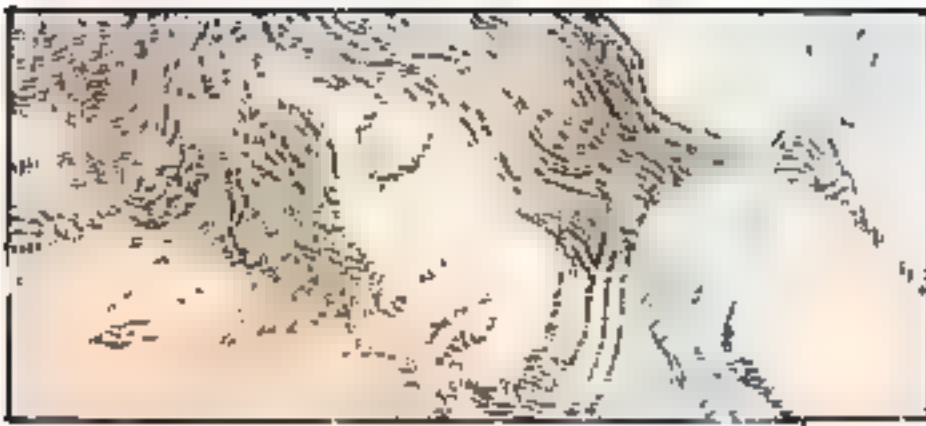


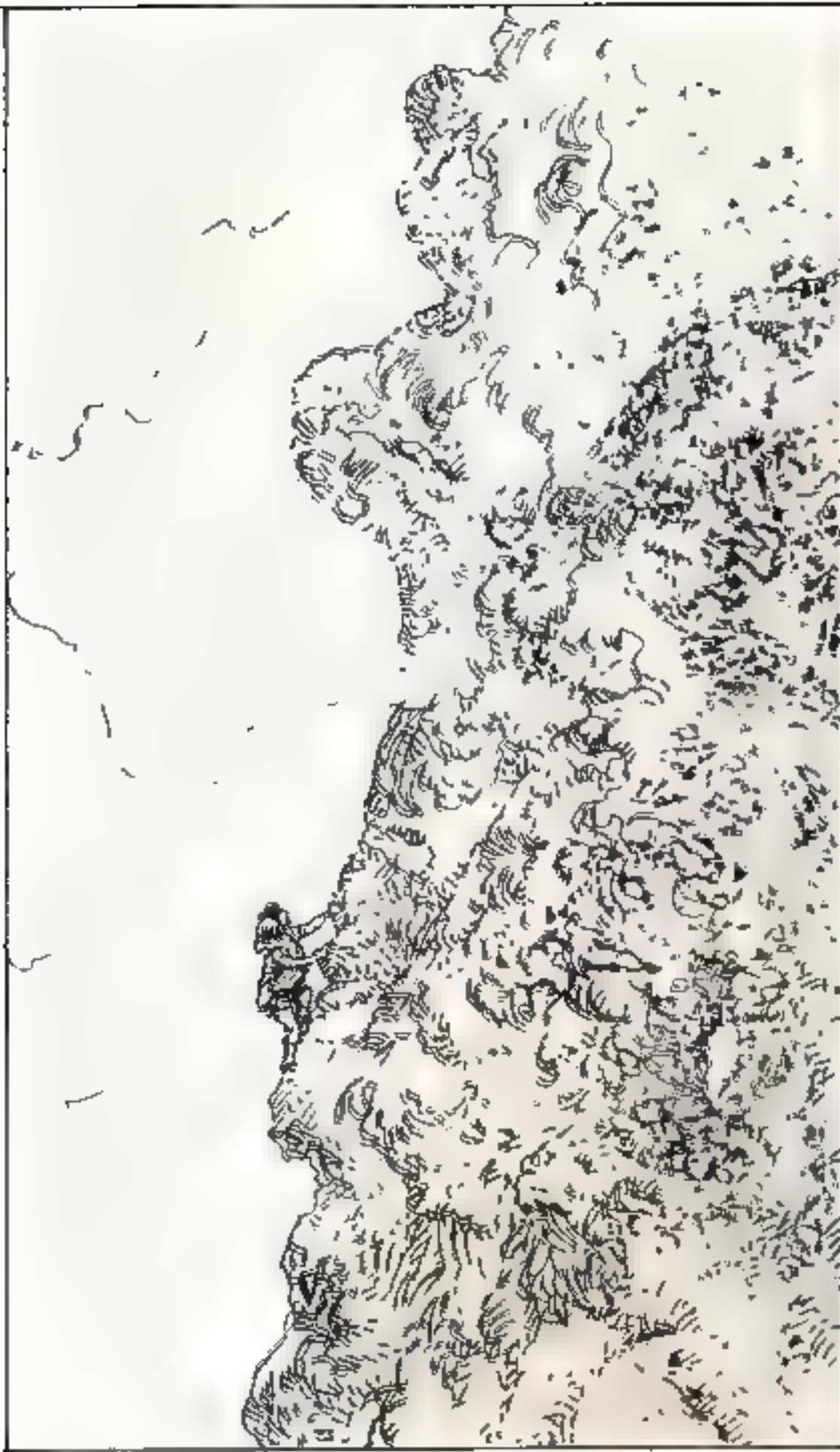
THE GOOD THING IS
THAT IT'LL KEEP US FROM
FREEZING TO DEATH. SLEEP,
NOW, MY SWEET. TOMORROW
WE'LL FIND A WAY TO LEAVE
THIS COVE AND SEARCH OUT
SOMETHING TO EAT.



YOU ARE GUILTY OF THE
WORST CRIME THAT CAN BE
COMMITTED IN THIS
LAND, MAIKA...



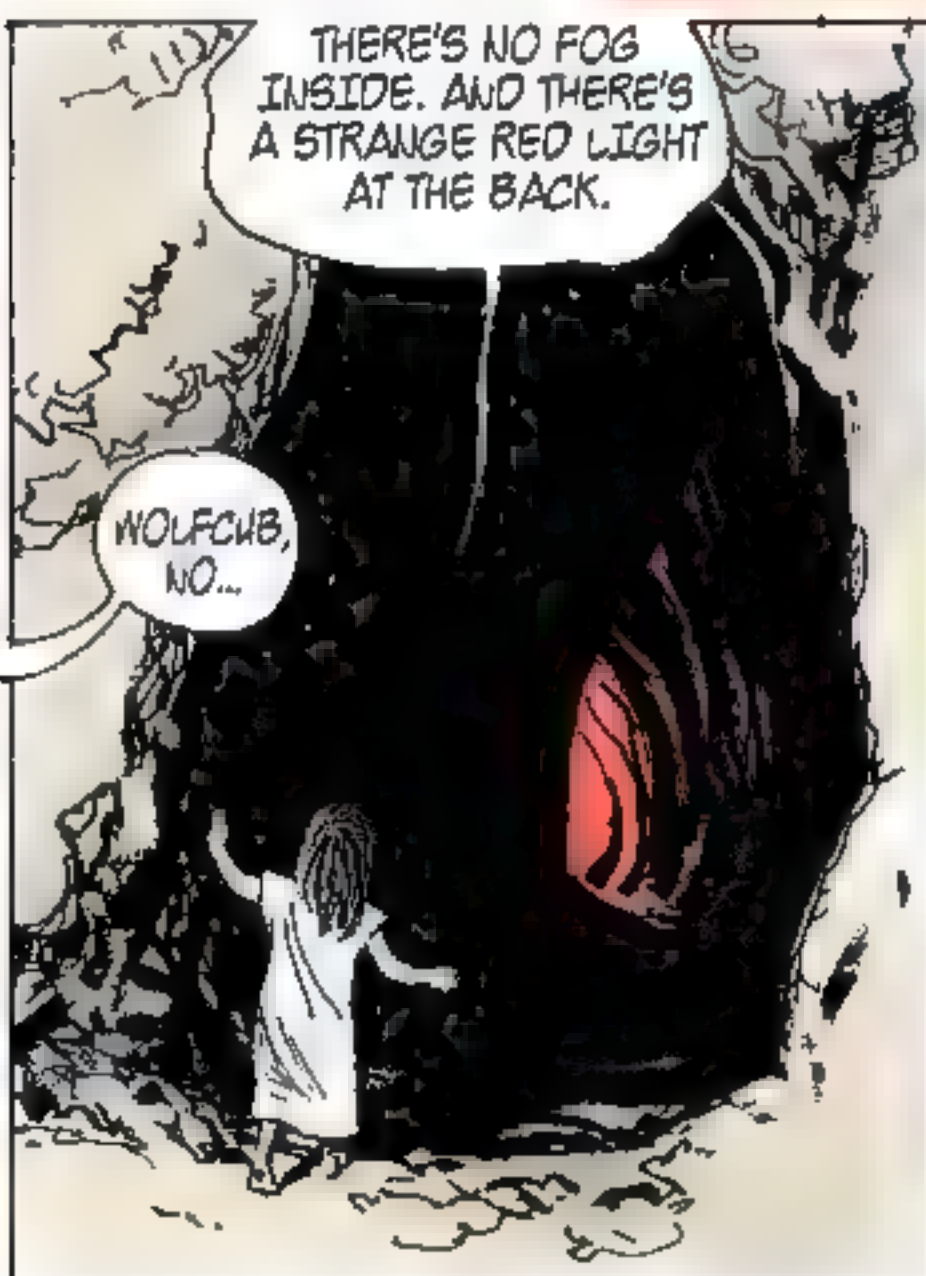




IT'S IMPOSSIBLE
TO TELL HOW FAR
THE TOP IS.



THORGAL,
LOOK... I THINK
I FOUND A
CAVE.



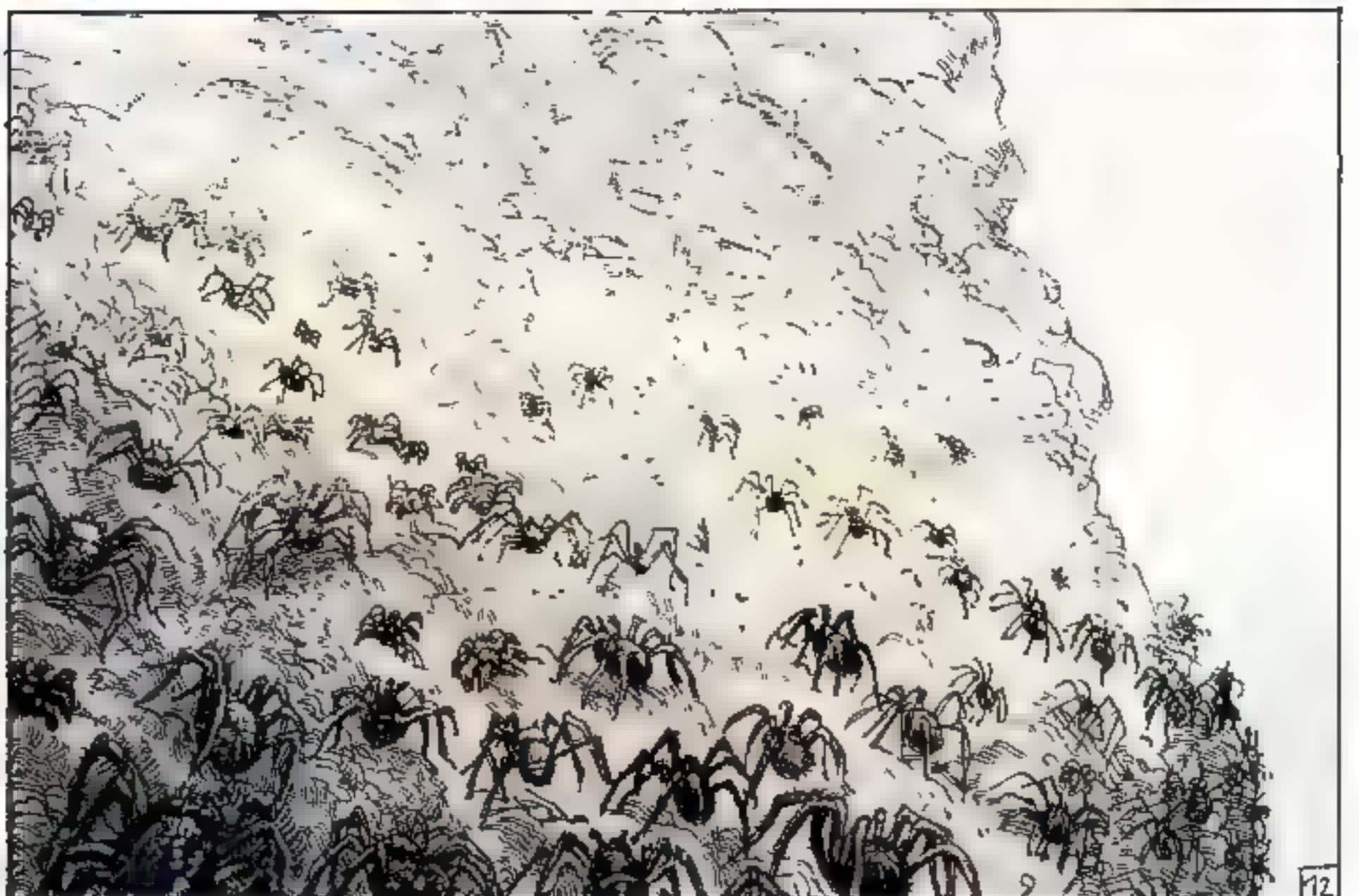
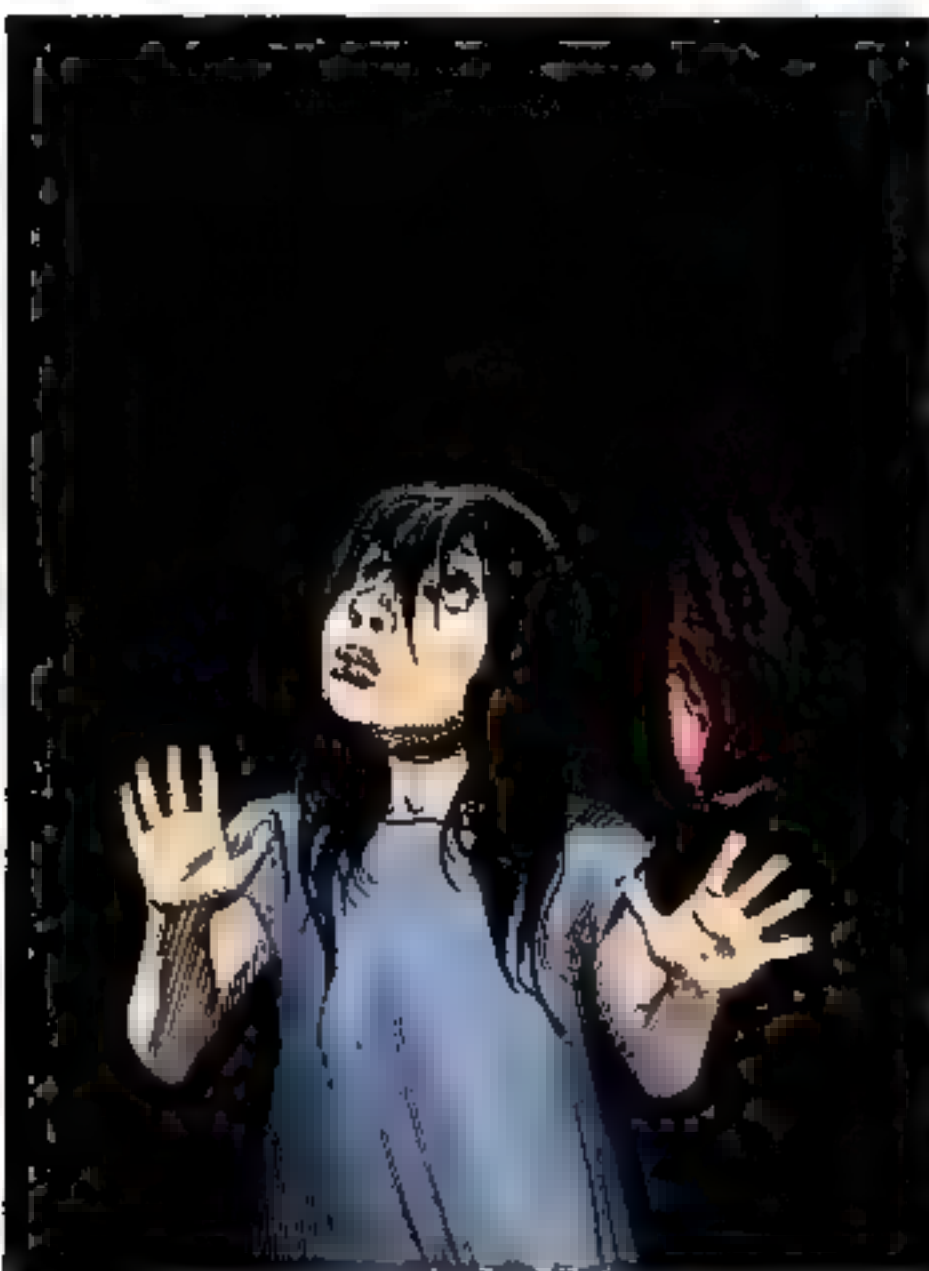
THERE'S NO FOG
INSIDE. AND THERE'S
A STRANGE RED LIGHT
AT THE BACK.

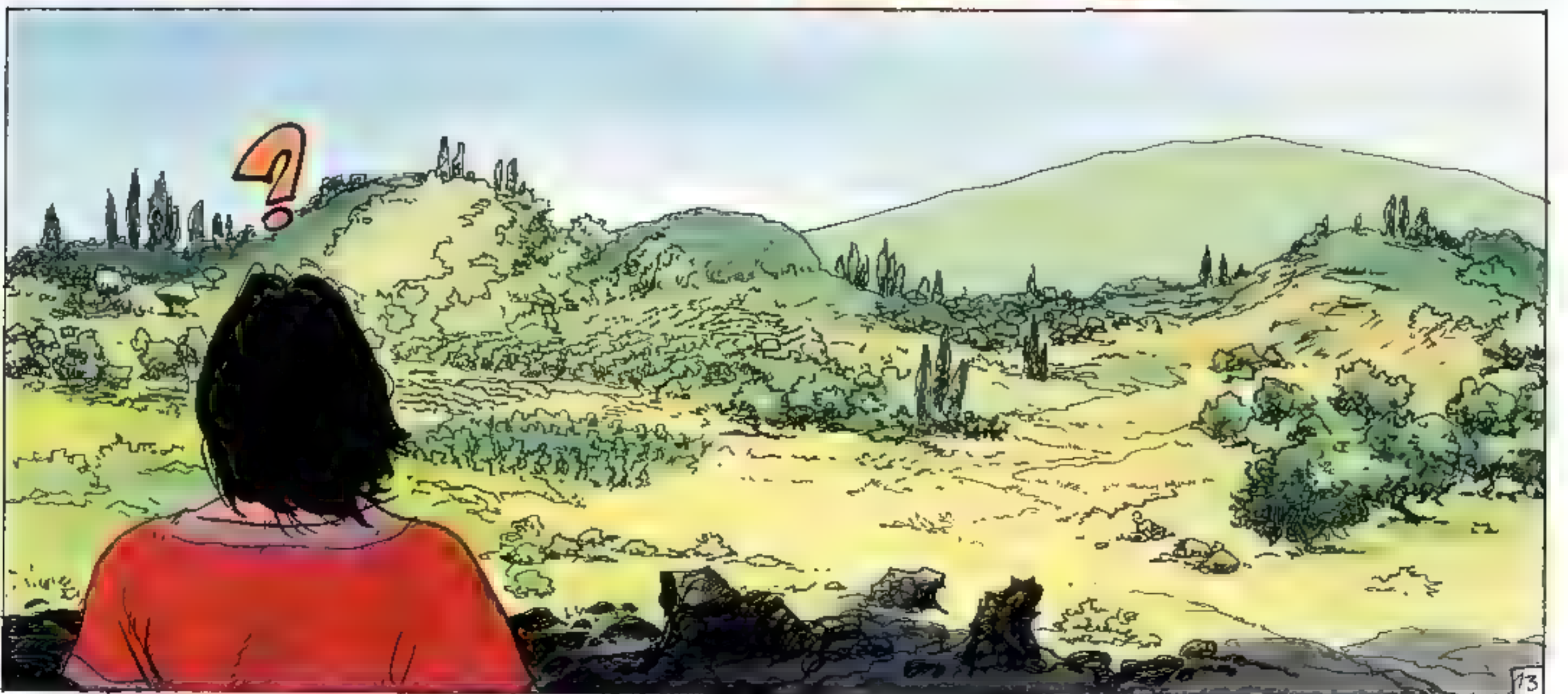
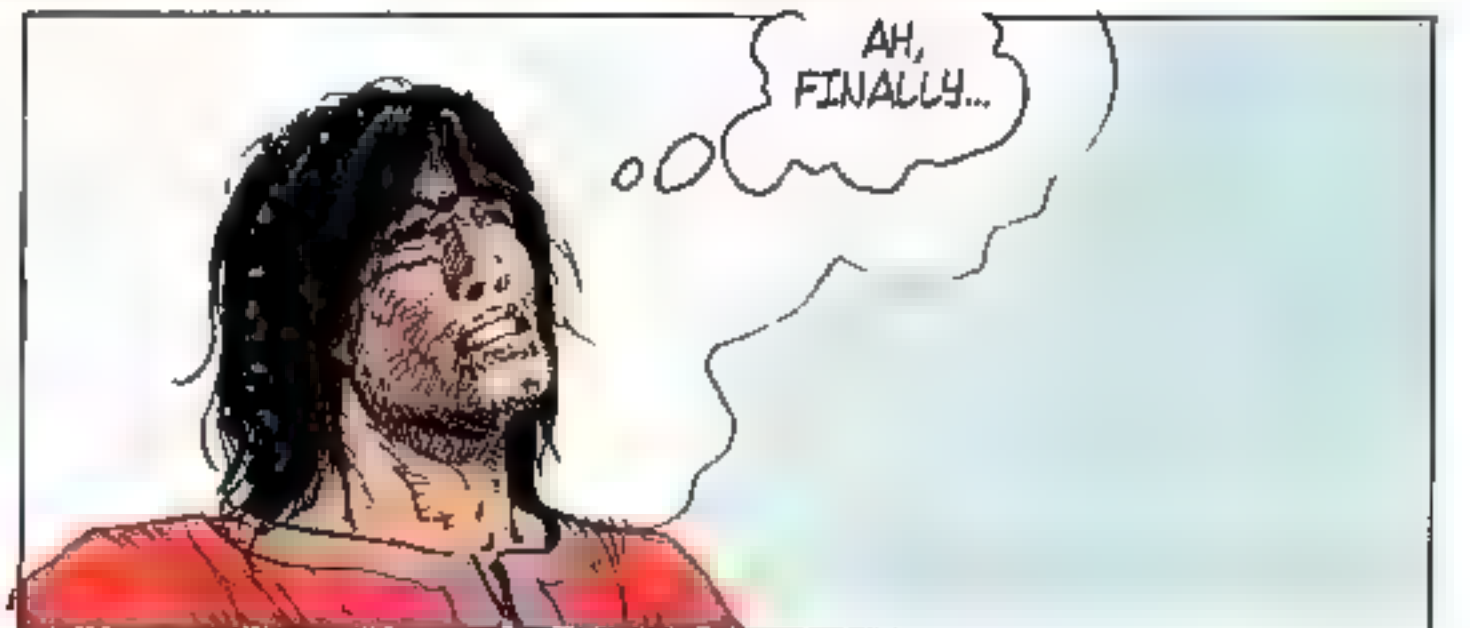
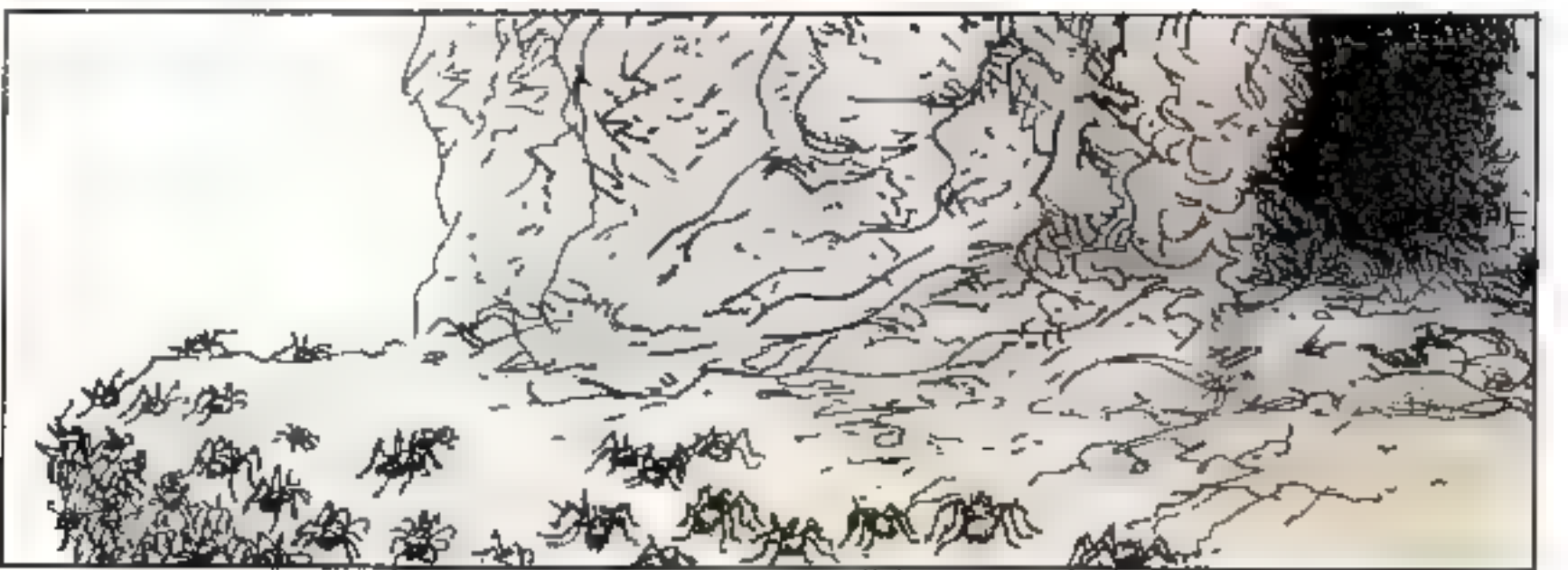
WOLFCUB,
NO...

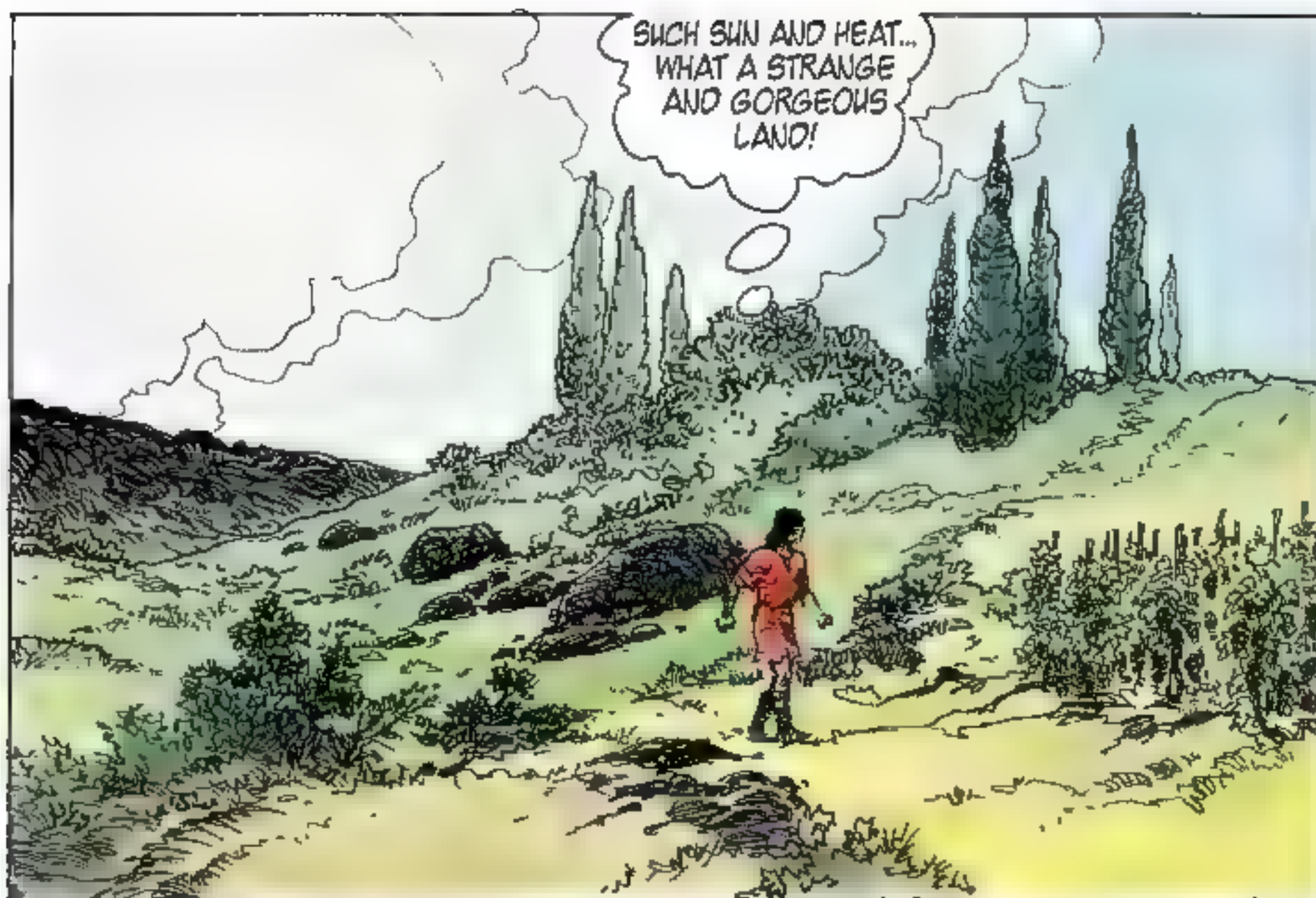


COME OUT OF
THIS CAVE. IT
COULD BE
DANGE...









SUCH SUN AND HEAT...
WHAT A STRANGE
AND GORGEOUS
LAND!



THIS BLACK SOIL
SEEMS FERTILE. AND
IT'S WARM, LIKE THE
SEA WAS.

THESE BUSHES ARE OBVIOUSLY
CULTIVATED. WHICH MEANS THESE
FAT BERRIES MUST BE EDIBLE.



HMMM... DELICIOUS! I FORGOT
HOW HUNGRY AND THIRSTY
I WAS. I'LL HAVE TO TAKE
SOME BACK TO...

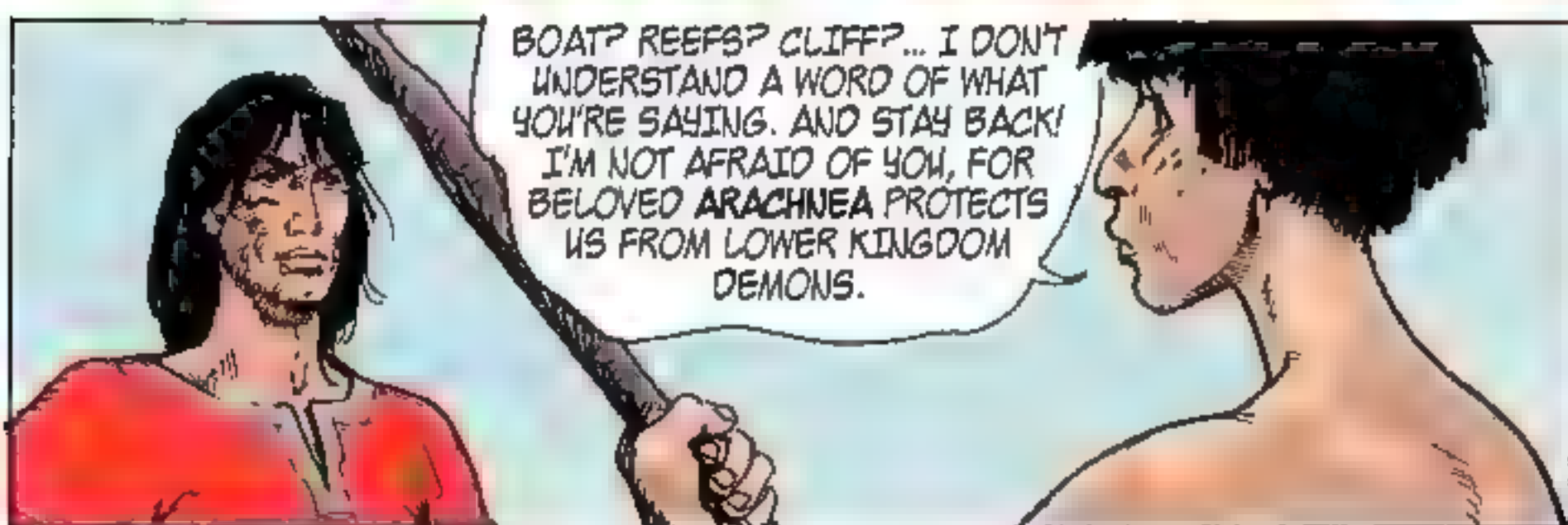


LEAVE THE
GRAPEVINES
ALONE, YOU
THIEF!

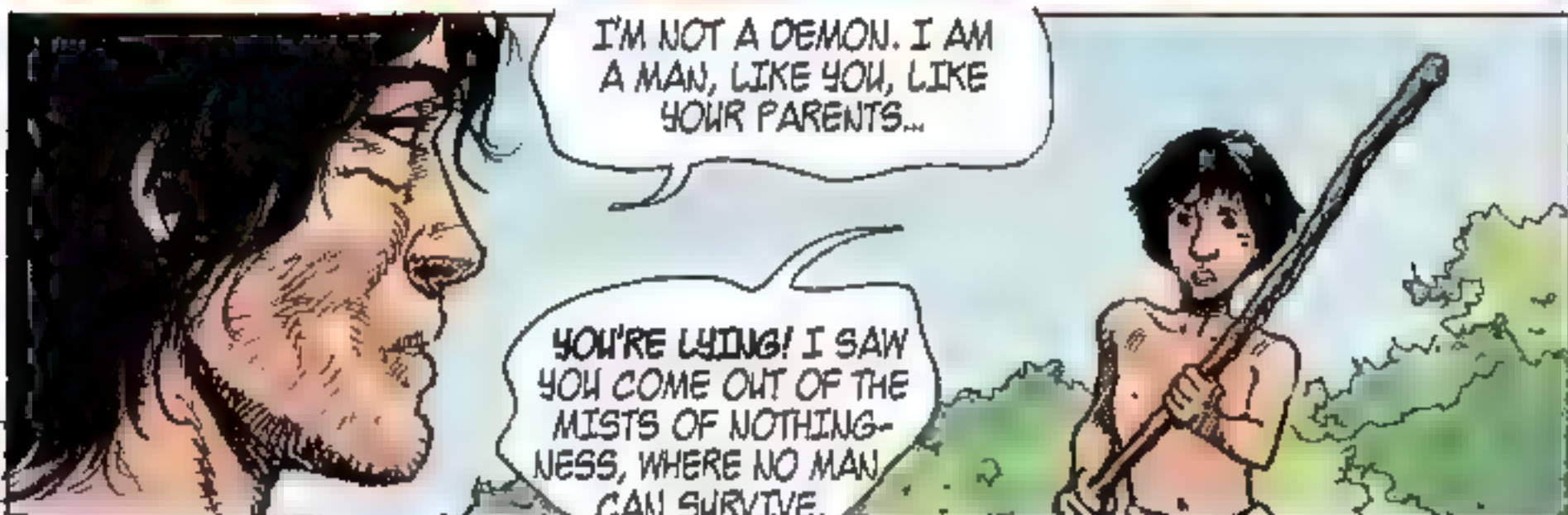
WHO ARE YOU? I'VE NEVER
SEEN YOU IN OUR LAND.
ARE YOU A DEMON FROM
THE LOWER KINGDOM?



MY NAME
IS THORGAL.
MY BOAT RAN
AGROUND ON THE
REEFS AT THE
FOOT OF THE
CLIFF AND...



BOAT? REEFS? CLIFF?... I DON'T
UNDERSTAND A WORD OF WHAT
YOU'RE SAYING. AND STAY BACK!
I'M NOT AFRAID OF YOU, FOR
BELOVED ARACHNEA PROTECTS
US FROM LOWER KINGDOM
DEMONS.



I'M NOT A DEMON. I AM
A MAN, LIKE YOU, LIKE
YOUR PARENTS...

YOU'RE LYING! I SAW
YOU COME OUT OF THE
MISTS OF NOTHING-
NESS, WHERE NO MAN
CAN SURVIVE.





LISTEN, KID... MY LITTLE GIRL IS STUCK INSIDE A CAVE IN THE CLIFF. I NEED HELP, AND QUICK. WHERE'S YOUR VILLAGE?

VILLAGE?



STOP PLAYING DUMB. WHERE DO YOU LIVE?

I LIVE IN ARACHNOPOLIS, LIKE EVERYONE ELSE.

TAKE ME TO ARACHNOPOLIS, THEN.



AND DON'T BE AFRAID. I MEAN YOU NO HARM. HERE, YOU CAN HAVE YOUR STAFF BACK

I... I'M NOT AFRAID. IF YOU'RE NOT A DEMON, WHO ARE YOU?



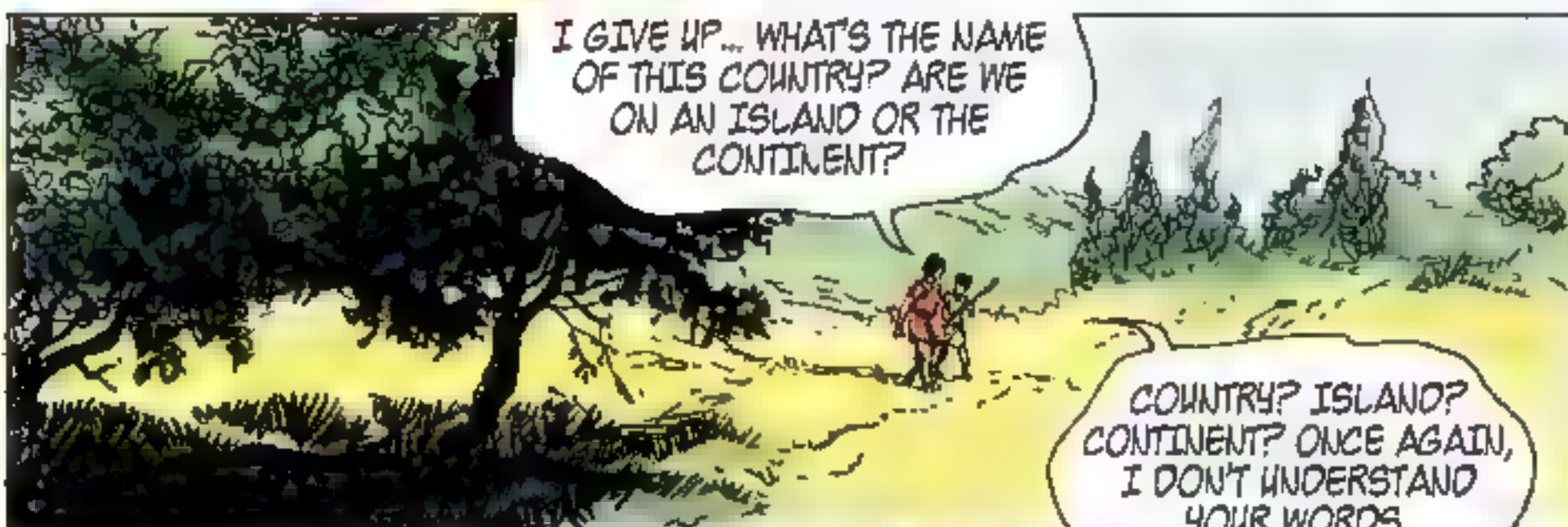
I TOLD YOU ALREADY: MY NAME IS THORGAL. I CAME FROM THE NORTH WITH MY FAMILY.

THE NORTH? WHAT'S THAT - THE NORTH? EVERYONE KNOWS THERE'S NOTHING BEYOND THE MISTS OF NOTHINGNESS



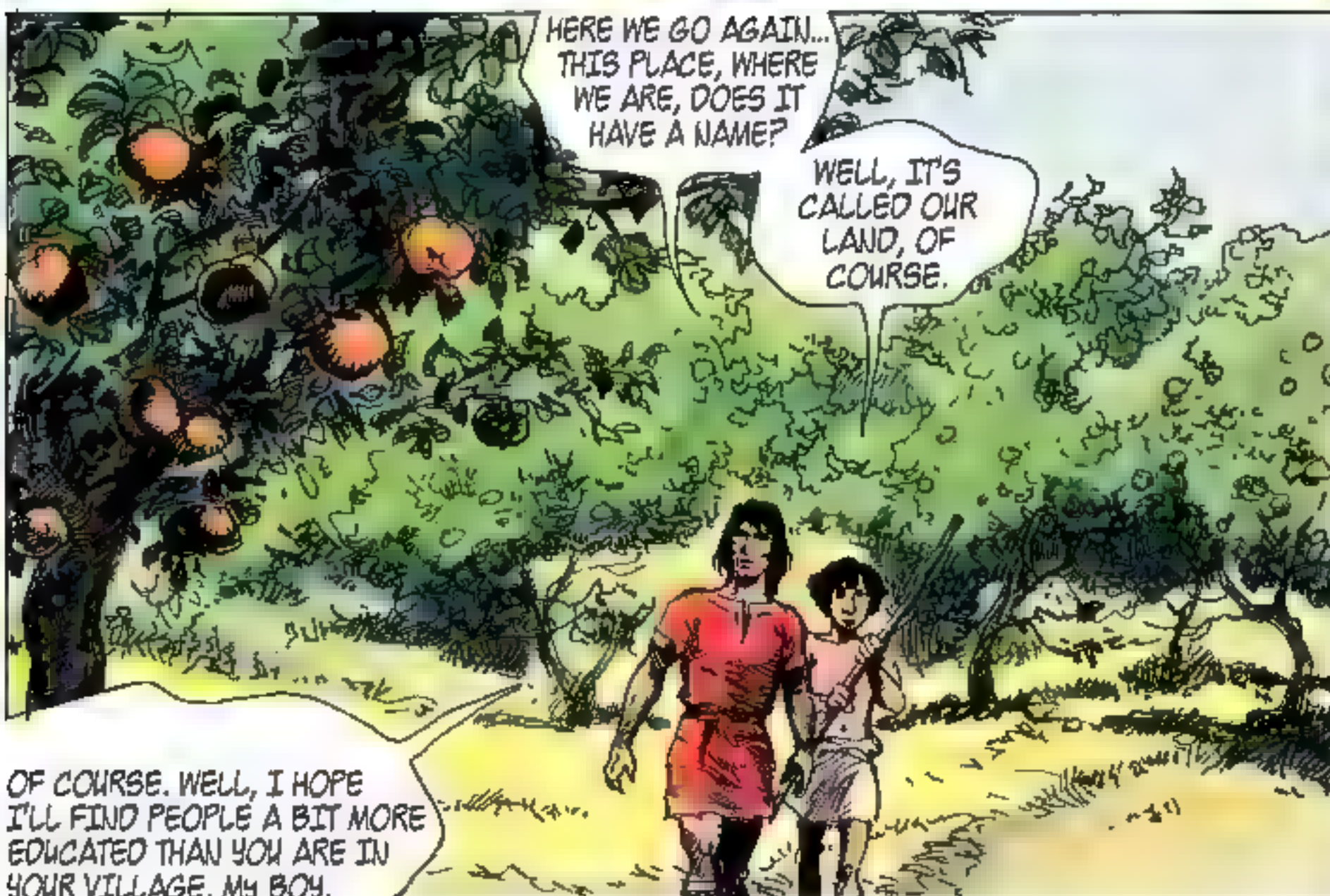
OF COURSE THERE IS. THERE'S THE SEA, AND BEYOND THE SEA ARE OTHER LANDS, OTHER COUNTRIES.

YOU'RE LYING. OUR PRIEST-KING TOLD US: THERE IS NOTHING. NOTHING BUT DEATH. WE'RE FORBIDDEN FROM GOING NEAR THE MISTS. THOSE WHO ENTER THEM MEET THEIR DEATH.



I GIVE UP... WHAT'S THE NAME OF THIS COUNTRY? ARE WE ON AN ISLAND OR THE CONTINENT?

COUNTRY? ISLAND? CONTINENT? ONCE AGAIN, I DON'T UNDERSTAND YOUR WORDS.

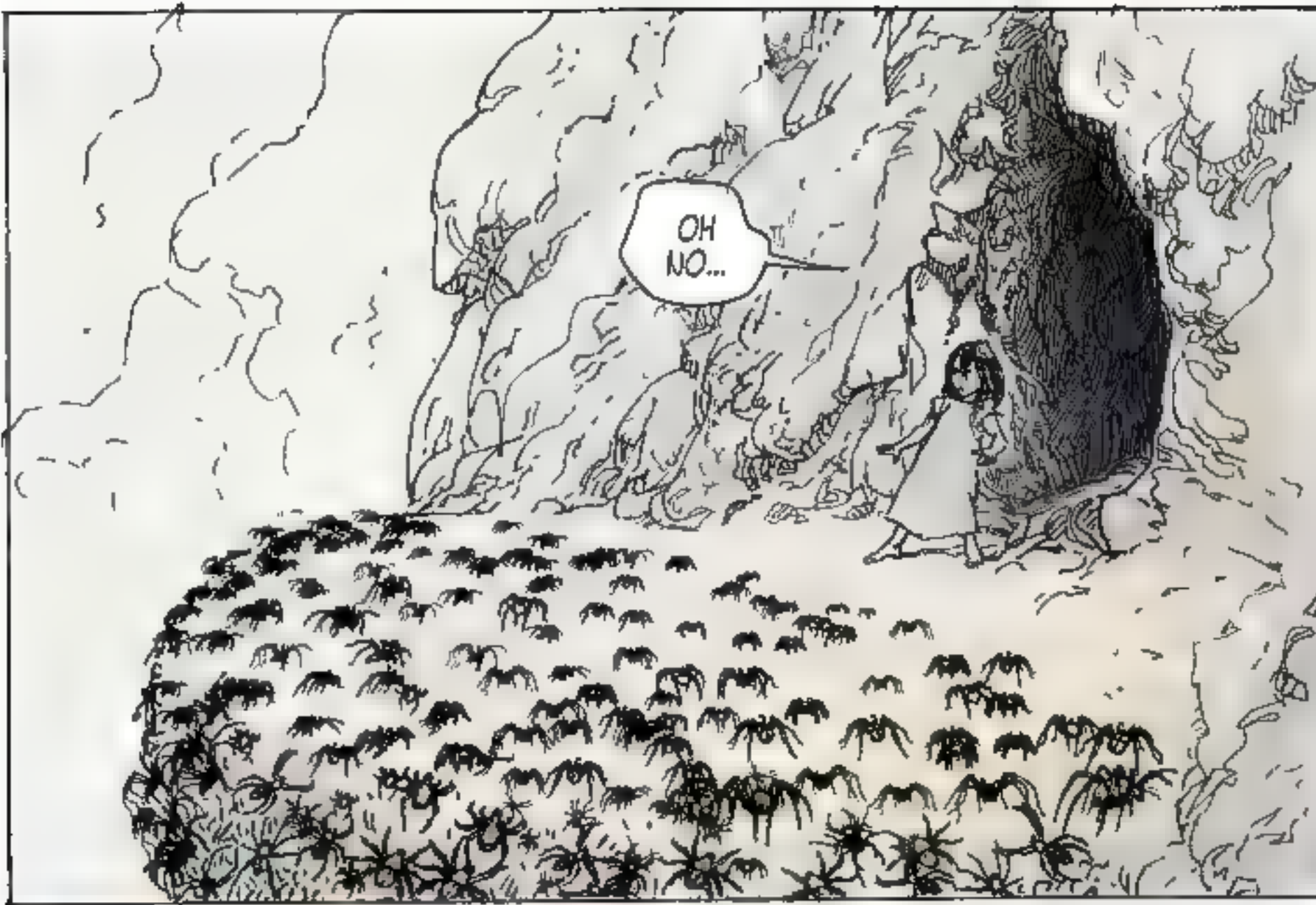


HERE WE GO AGAIN... THIS PLACE, WHERE WE ARE, DOES IT HAVE A NAME?

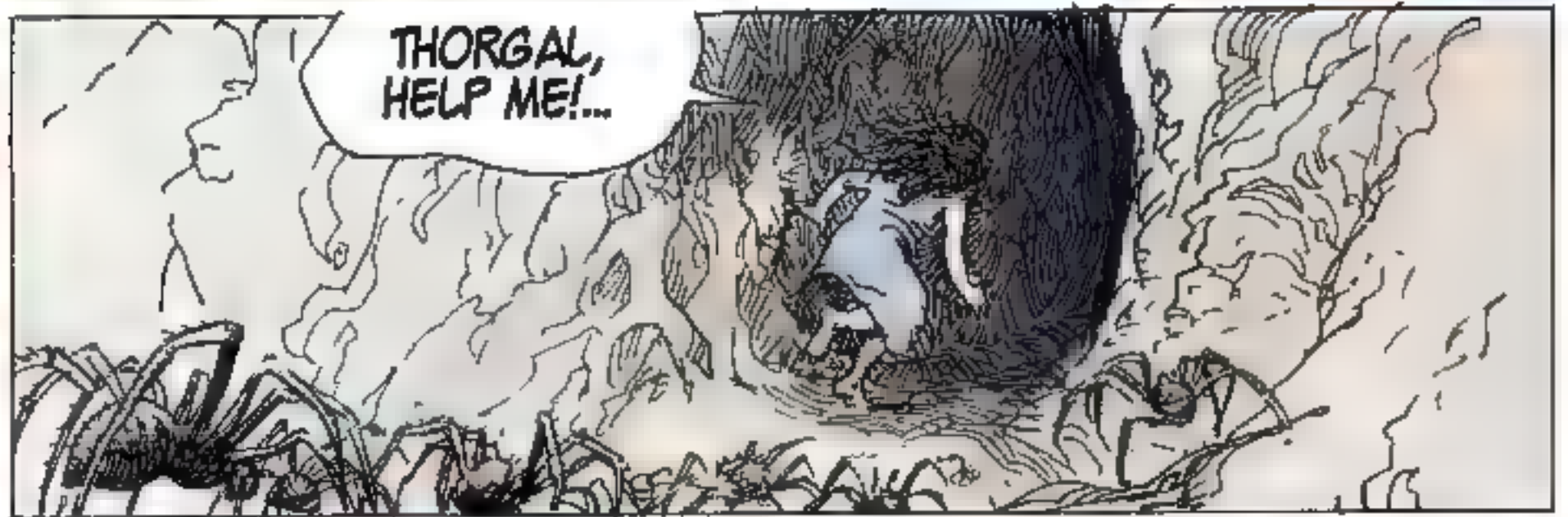
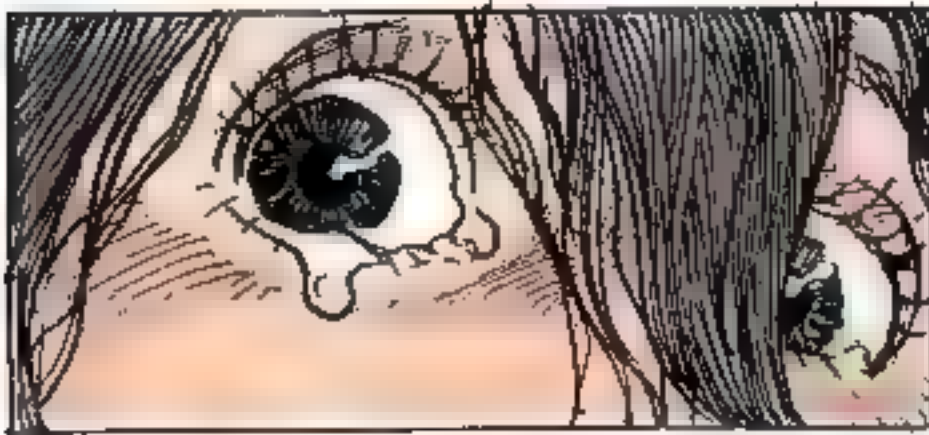
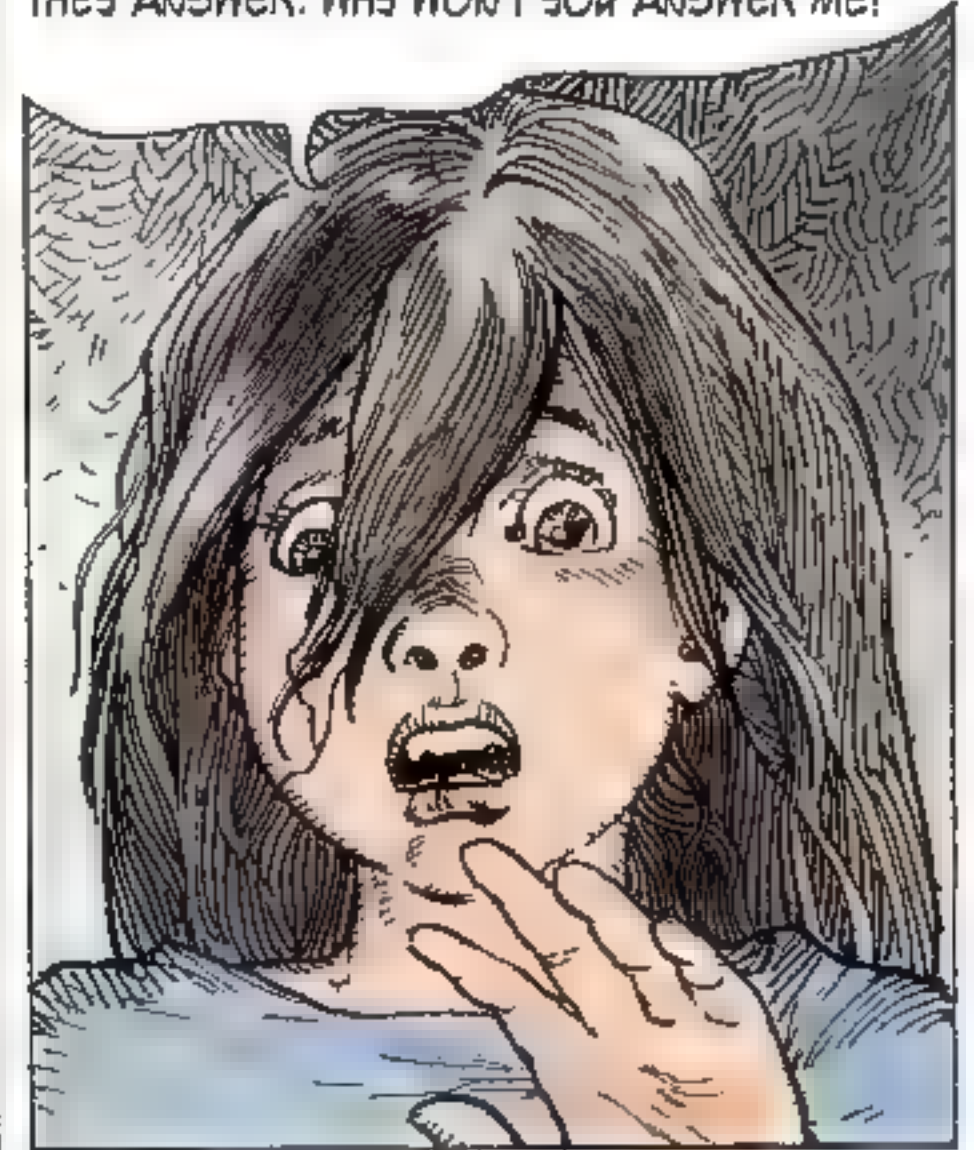
WELL, IT'S CALLED OUR LAND, OF COURSE.

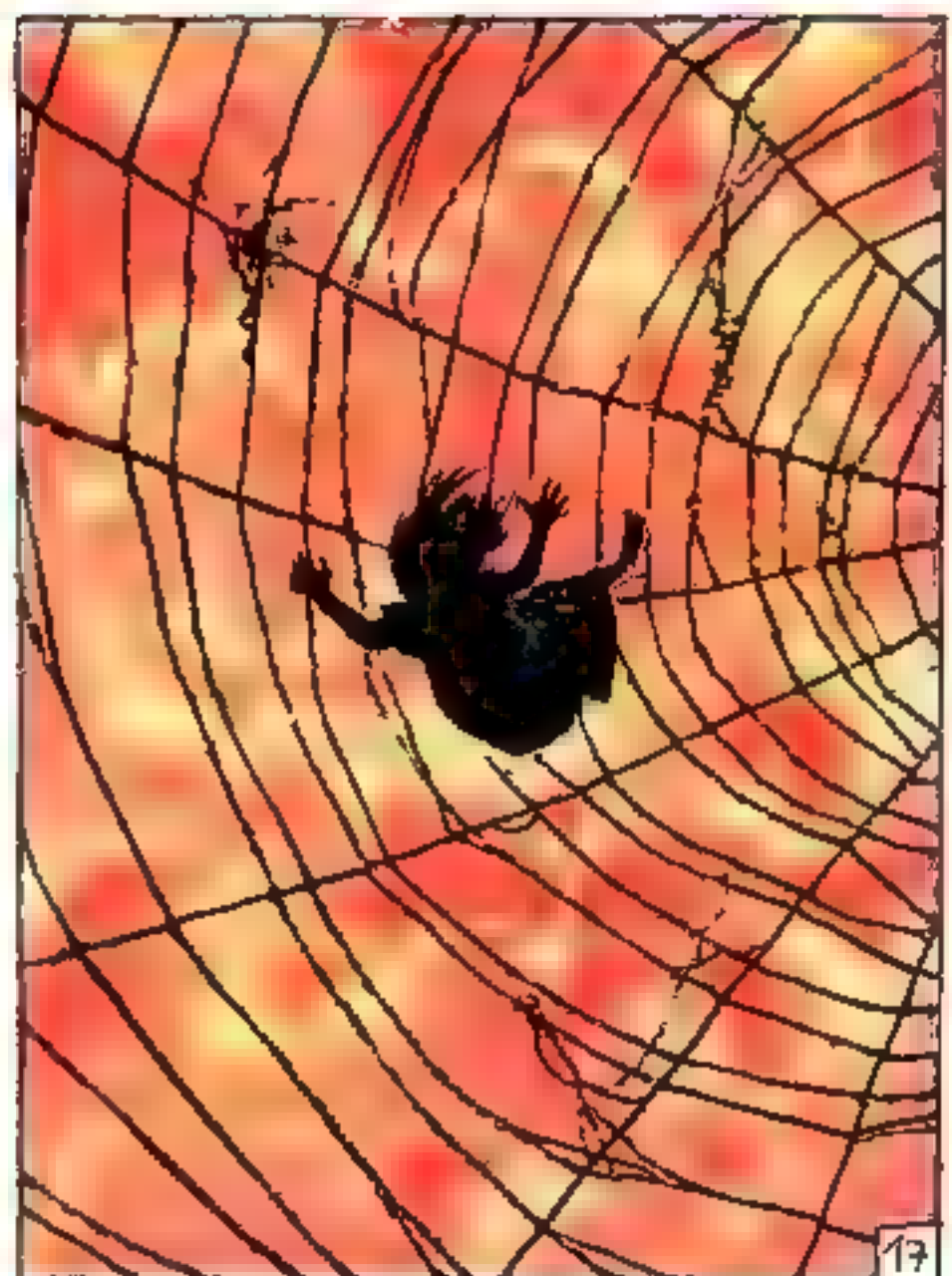
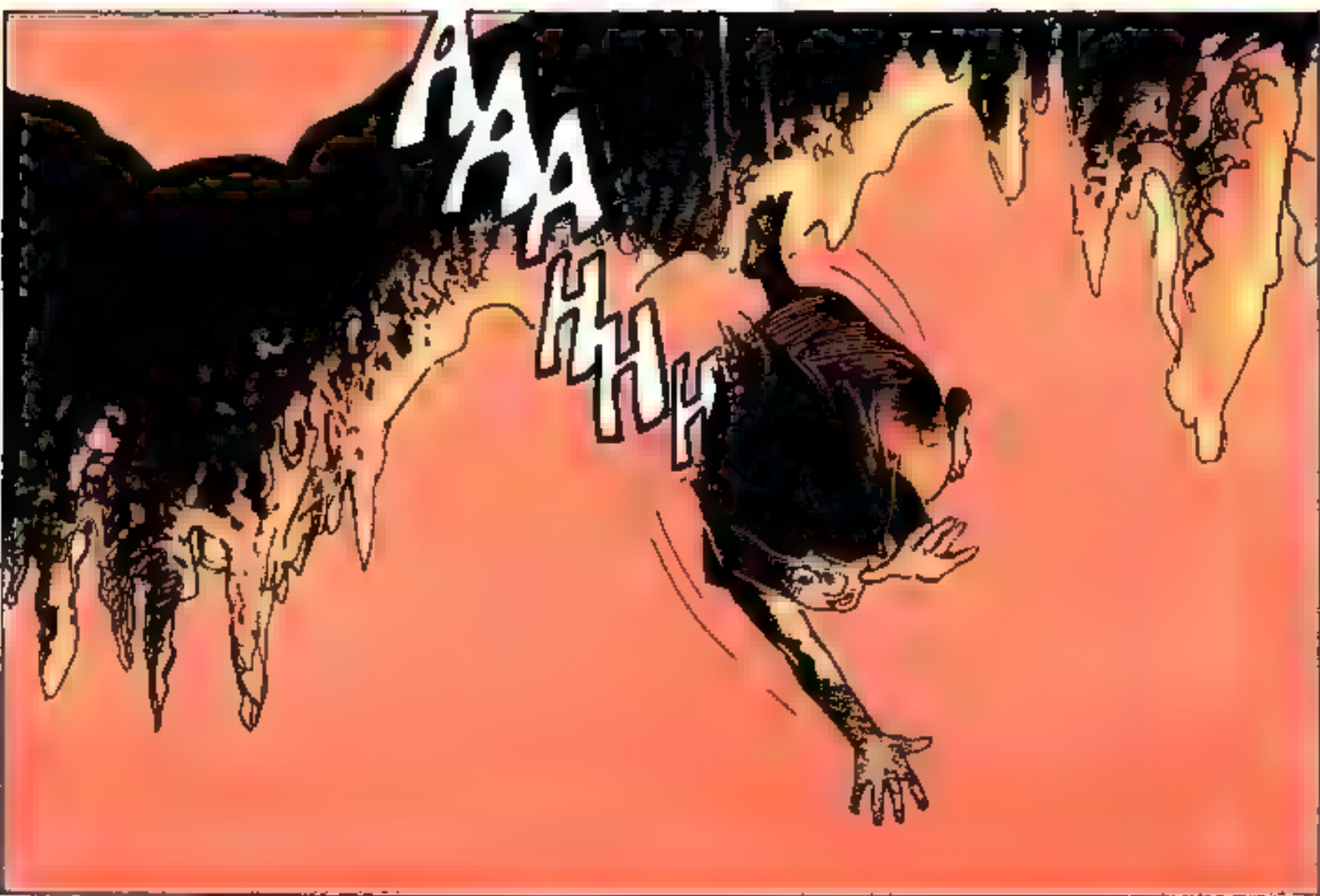
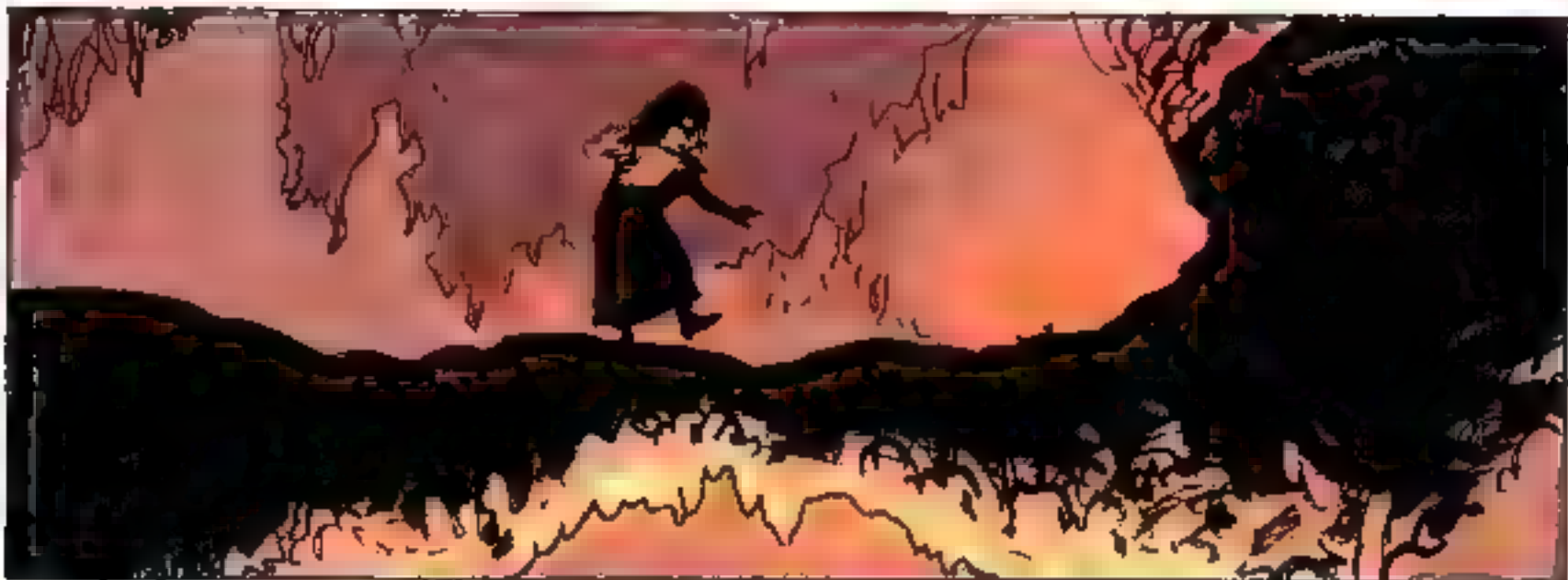
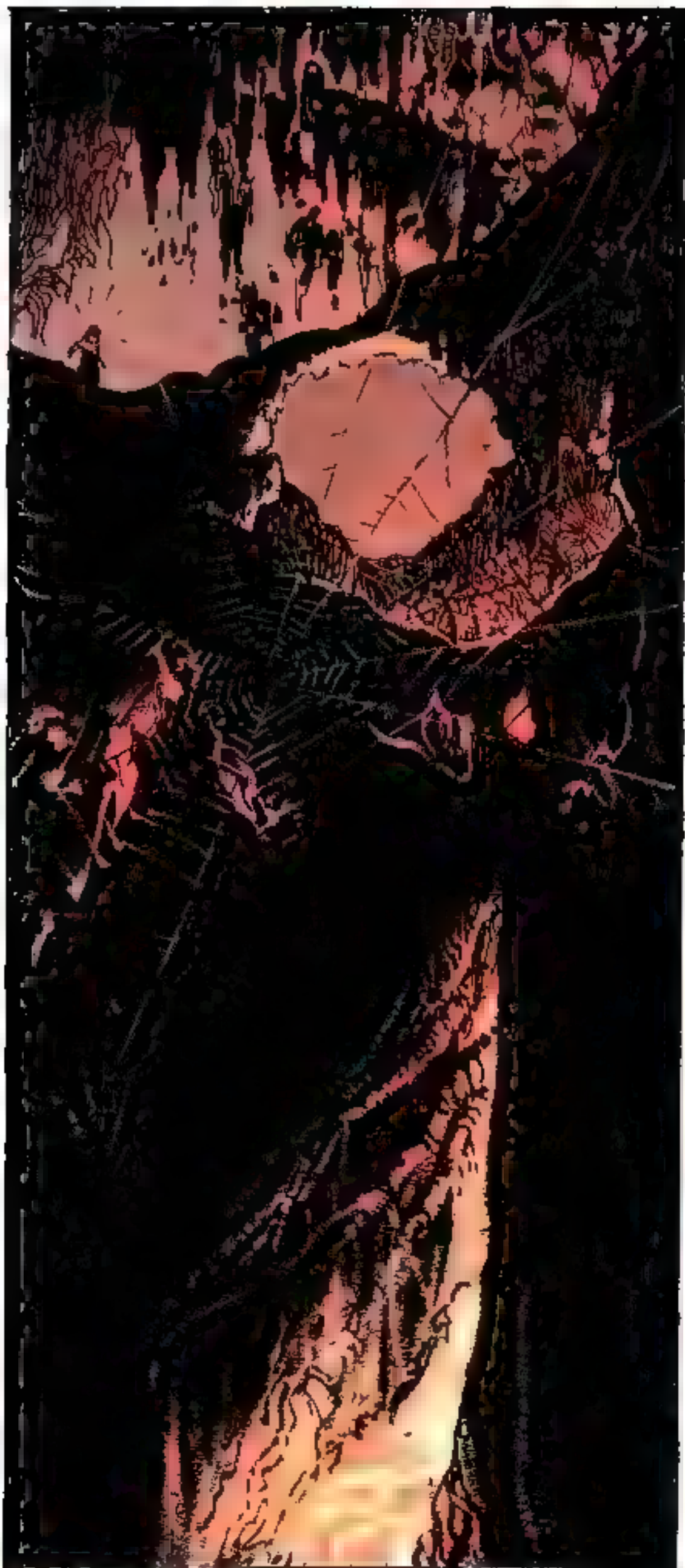
OF COURSE. WELL, I HOPE I'LL FIND PEOPLE A BIT MORE EDUCATED THAN YOU ARE IN YOUR VILLAGE, MY BOY.

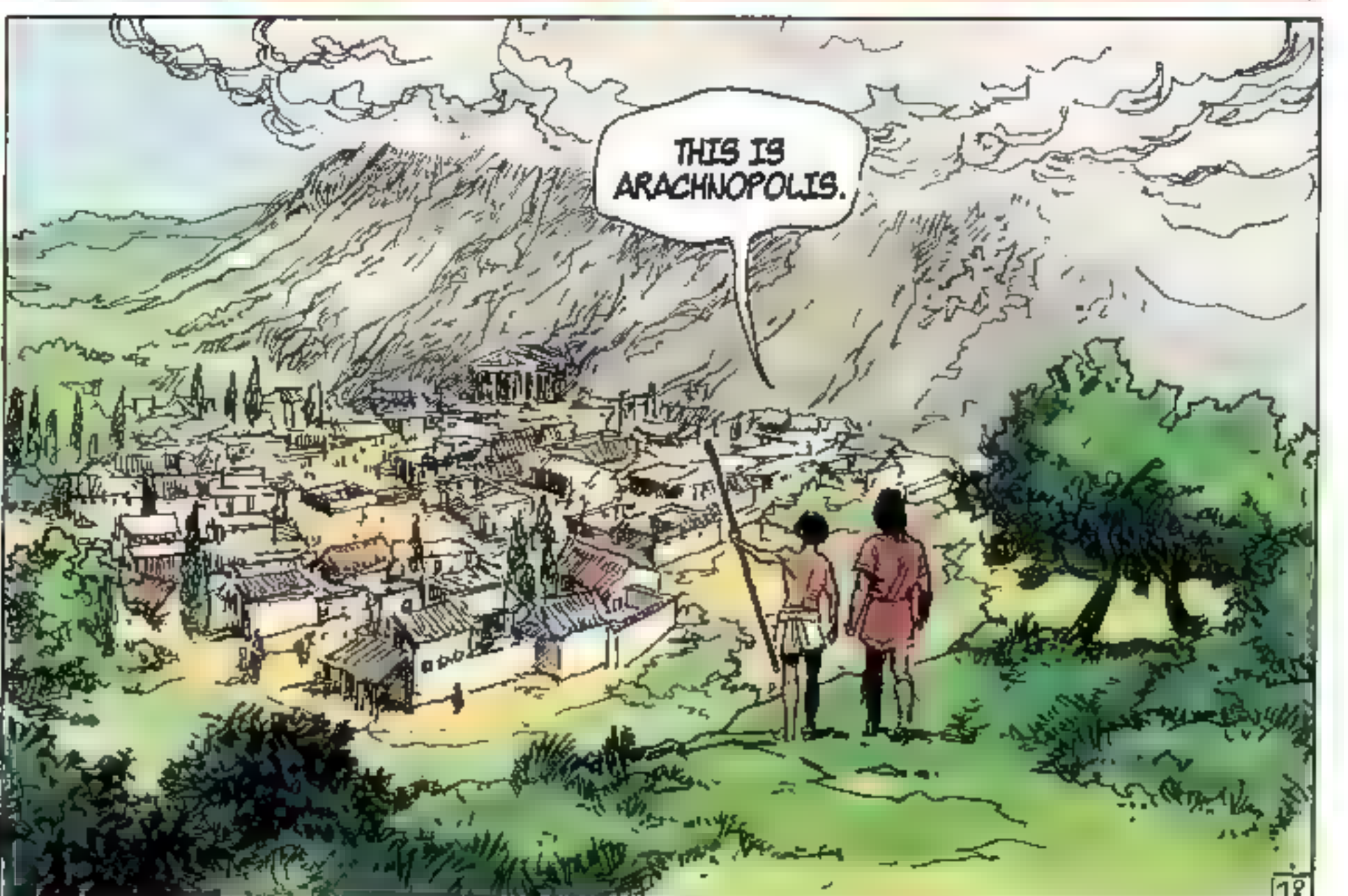
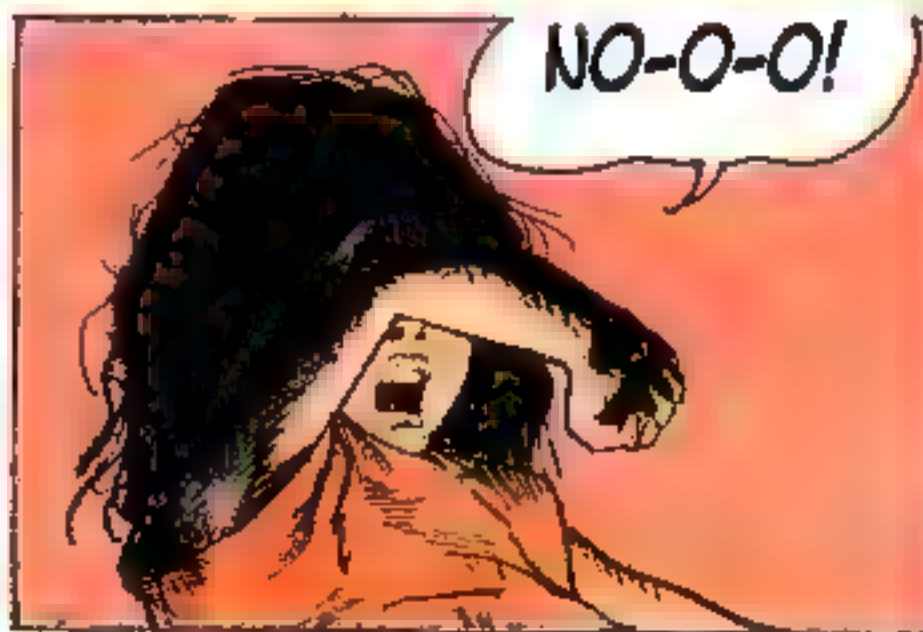




WHY DO YOU WANT TO HURT ME? I LOVE ALL ANIMALS, YOU KNOW. I SPEAK TO THEM AND THEY ANSWER. WHY WON'T YOU ANSWER ME?









HE SAYS HIS NAME IS THORGAL AND HE COMES FROM A PLACE CALLED NORTH. HE CAME OUT OF THE MISTS OF NOTHINGNESS AND I CAUGHT HIM PILFERING OUR GRAPEVINES.

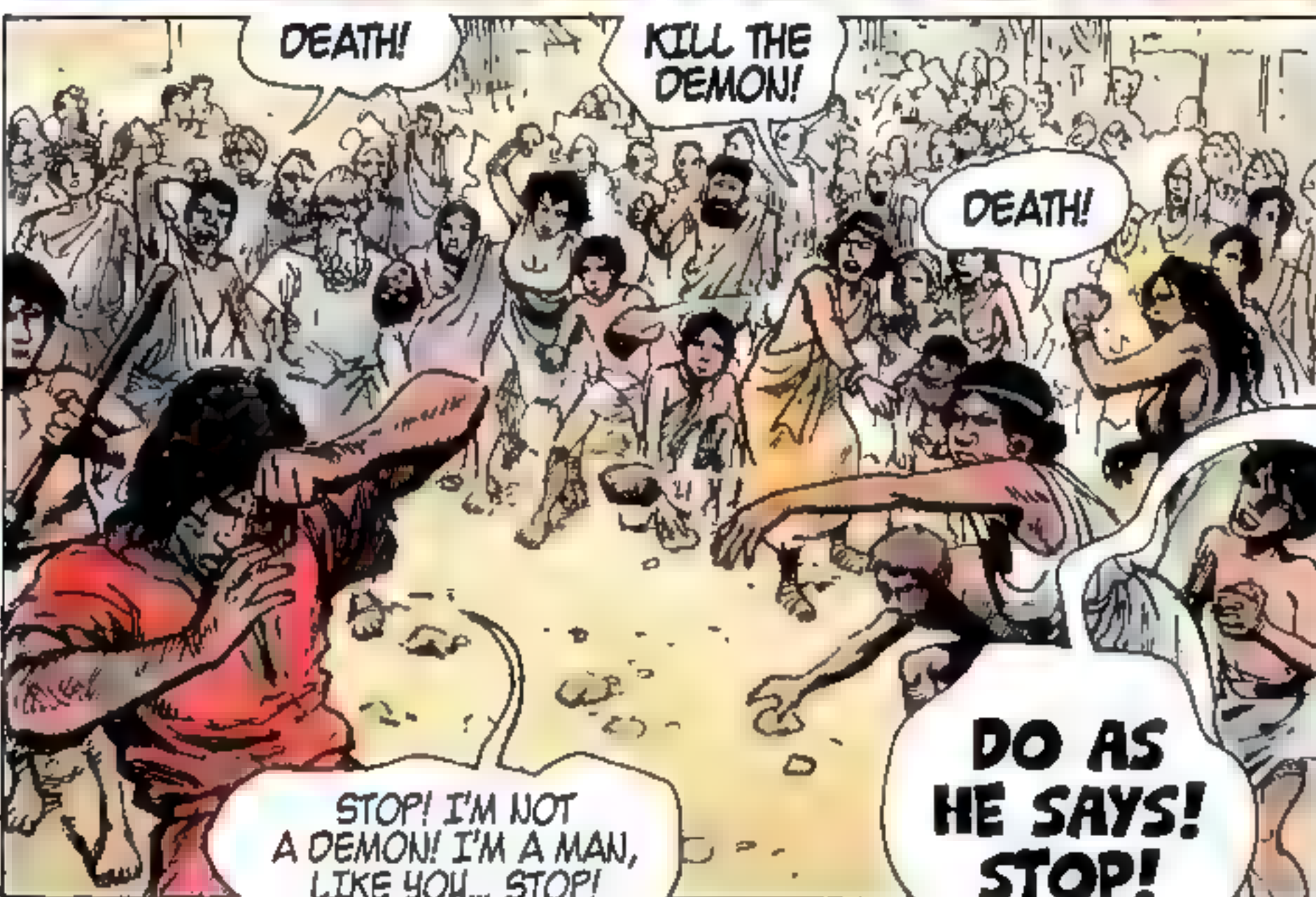


HE LIES. NO MAN CAN CROSS THE MISTS OF NOTHINGNESS.

HE'S A DEMON ESCAPED FROM THE LOWER KINGDOM.

LET'S KILL HIM BEFORE HE BRINGS US HARM!

YES! LET'S KILL HIM! LET'S STONE HIM!



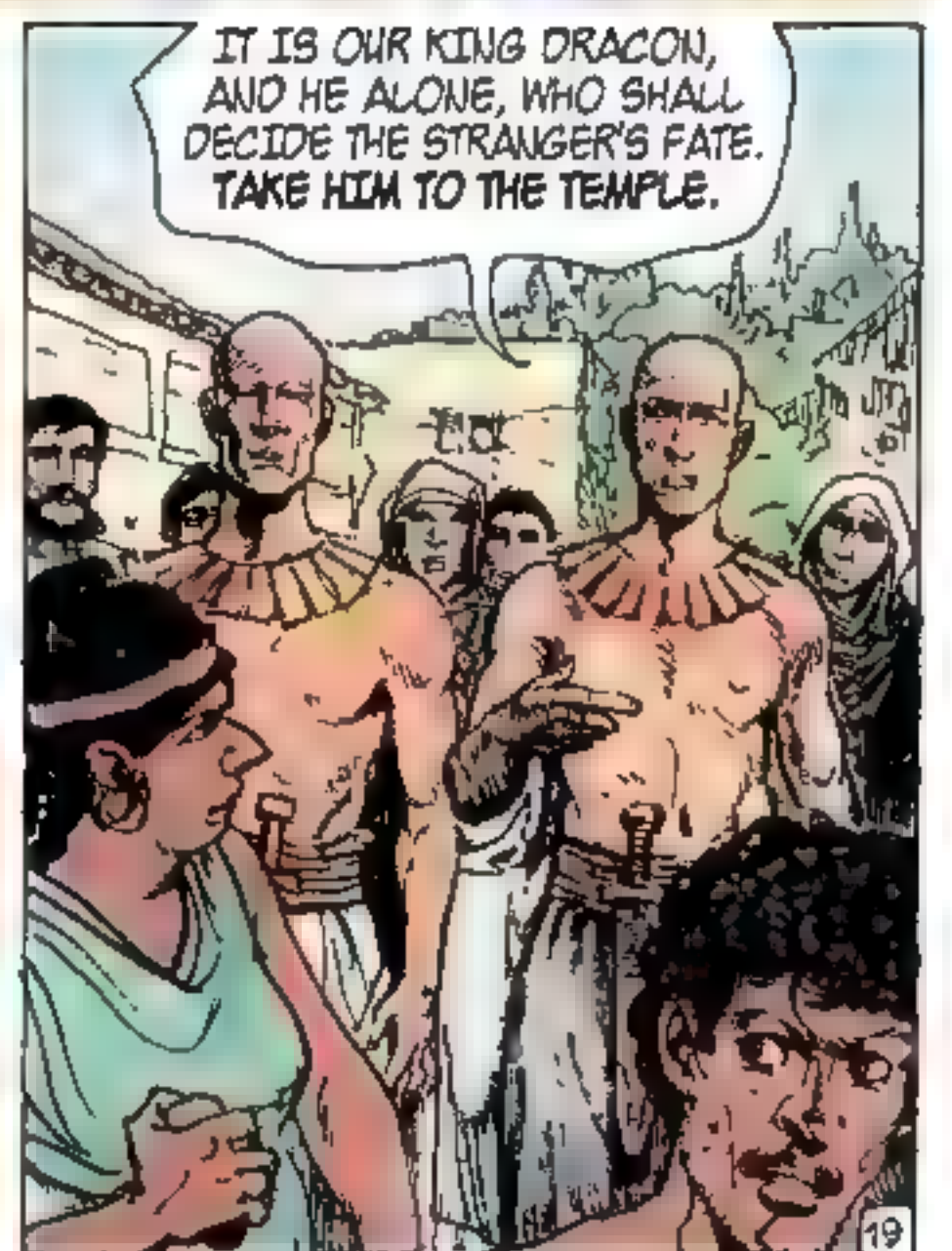
DEATH!

KILL THE DEMON!

DEATH!

STOP! I'M NOT A DEMON! I'M A MAN, LIKE YOU... STOP!

DO AS HE SAYS! STOP!



IT IS OUR KING DRAGON, AND HE ALONE, WHO SHALL DECIDE THE STRANGER'S FATE. TAKE HIM TO THE TEMPLE.



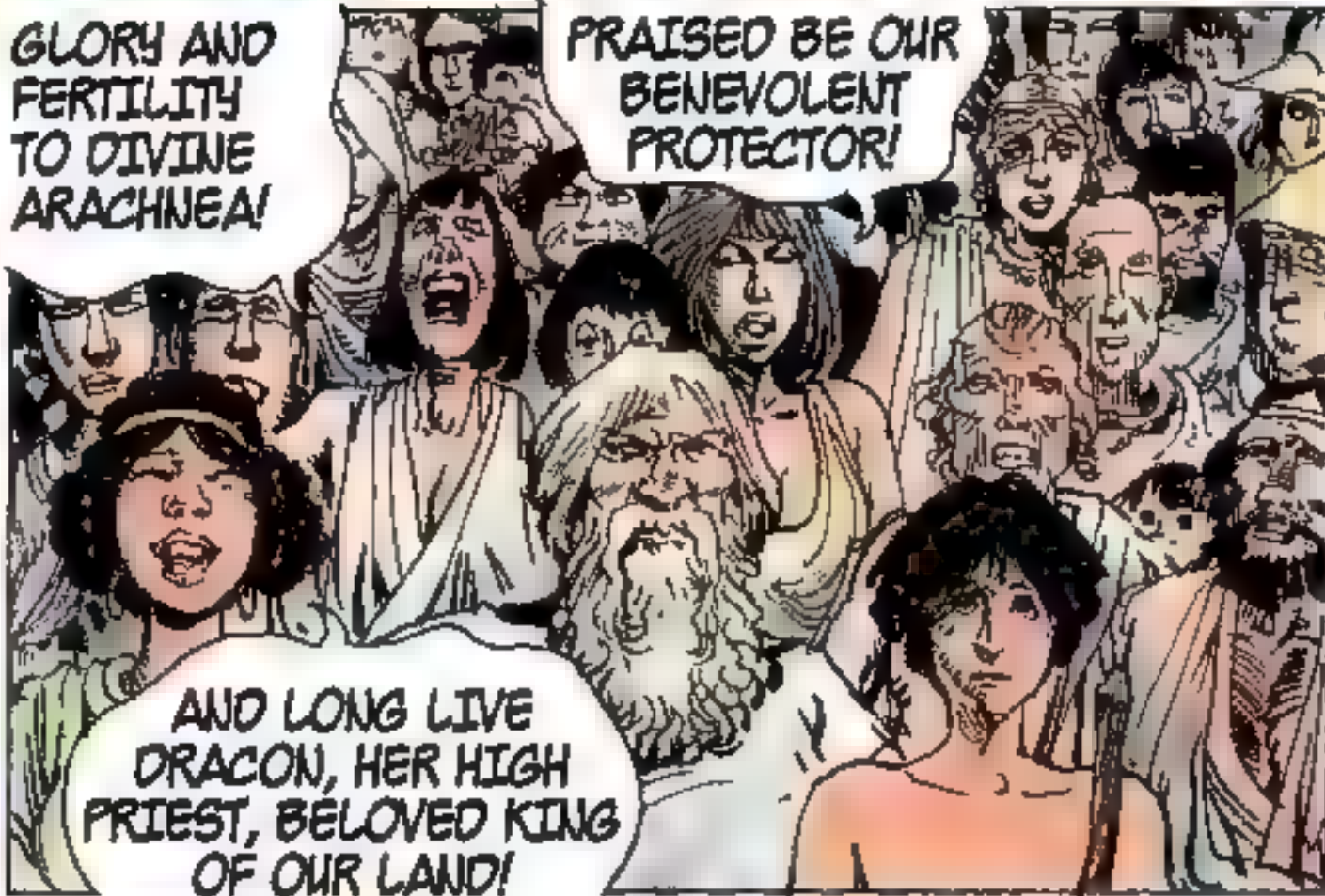
GO, NOW. THIS MAN, WHOEVER OR WHATEVER HE IS, IS IN THE CUSTODY OF THE PRIESTS OF ARACHNEA. YOU HAVE NOTHING MORE TO FEAR.

GO, AND PREPARE FOR THE FEAST OF THE EQUINOX.



GLORY AND FERTILITY TO DIVINE ARACHNEA!

PRAISED BE OUR BENEVOLENT PROTECTOR!



AND LONG LIVE DRACON, HER HIGH PRIEST, BELOVED KING OF OUR LAND!



NOW THAT WE'RE AMONG REASONABLE PEOPLE, I CAN FINALLY EXPLAIN WHAT HAPPENED TO ME. MY DAUGHTER AND I WERE SHIPWRECKED AT THE FOOT OF THE CLIFF AND...



STEP INTO THIS ROOM.

YOU'RE NOT LISTENING TO ME. I'M TELLING YOU I NEED HELP. MY LITTLE GIRL IS HELD INSIDE A...

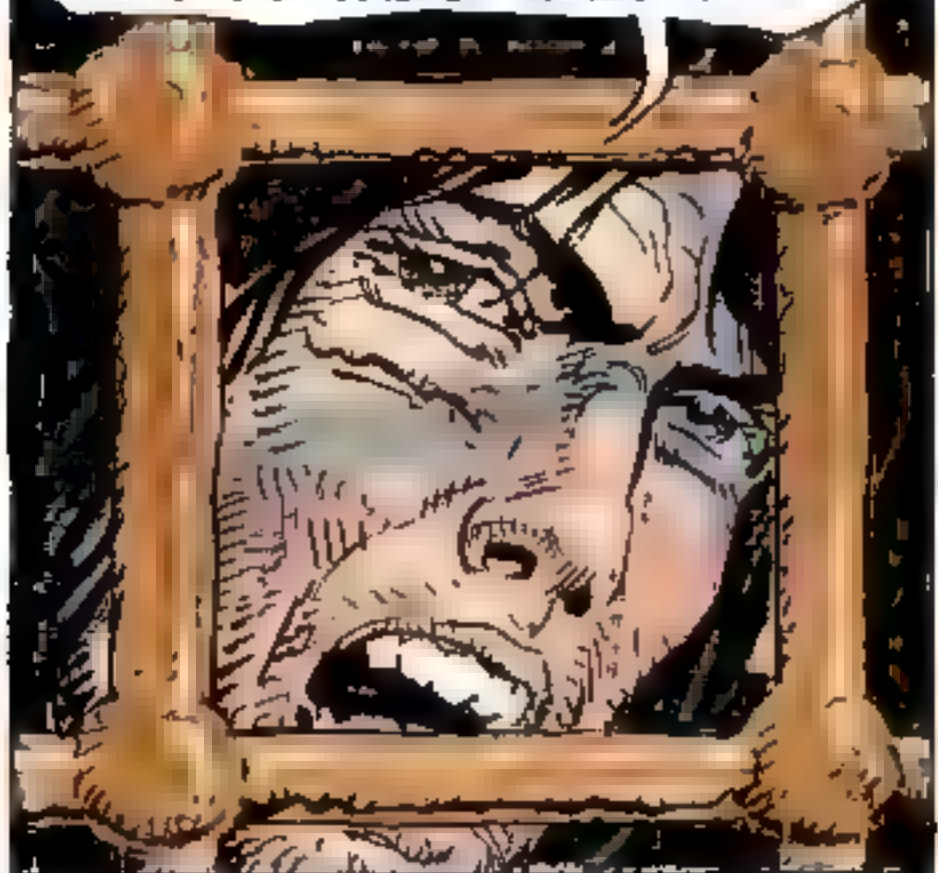


BY ALL THE DEMONS, GET IN! WE DON'T CARE ABOUT YOUR NONSENSE.



CLANG

BY THE HAMMER OF THOR,
LISTEN TO ME! ALL I WANT
IS TO GET MY DAUGHTER
OUT OF THAT CURSED CAVE,
REPAIR MY BOAT AND
LEAVE THIS LAND...



MAD! THEY'RE
ALL MAD, DEAF
AND BLIND!



THEY'RE
NOT MAD.
THEY'RE
IGNORANT.

THEY DON'T KNOW WHAT
BOATS OR SHIPS ARE. THEY
KNOW NOTHING OF SEAS AND
OCEANS. THEY DON'T EVEN
KNOW THAT THEIR WORLD
IS MERELY AN ISLAND
ENCIRCLED BY CLIFFS AND
PERMANENTLY SHROUDED
IN MIST.



YOU MUST BE DRAGON, THEN?
THE CHIEFTAIN OR KING OF THIS
INHOSPITABLE PEOPLE? BUT IF
YOU KNOW ALL THAT, WHY DON'T
YOU TELL THEM?



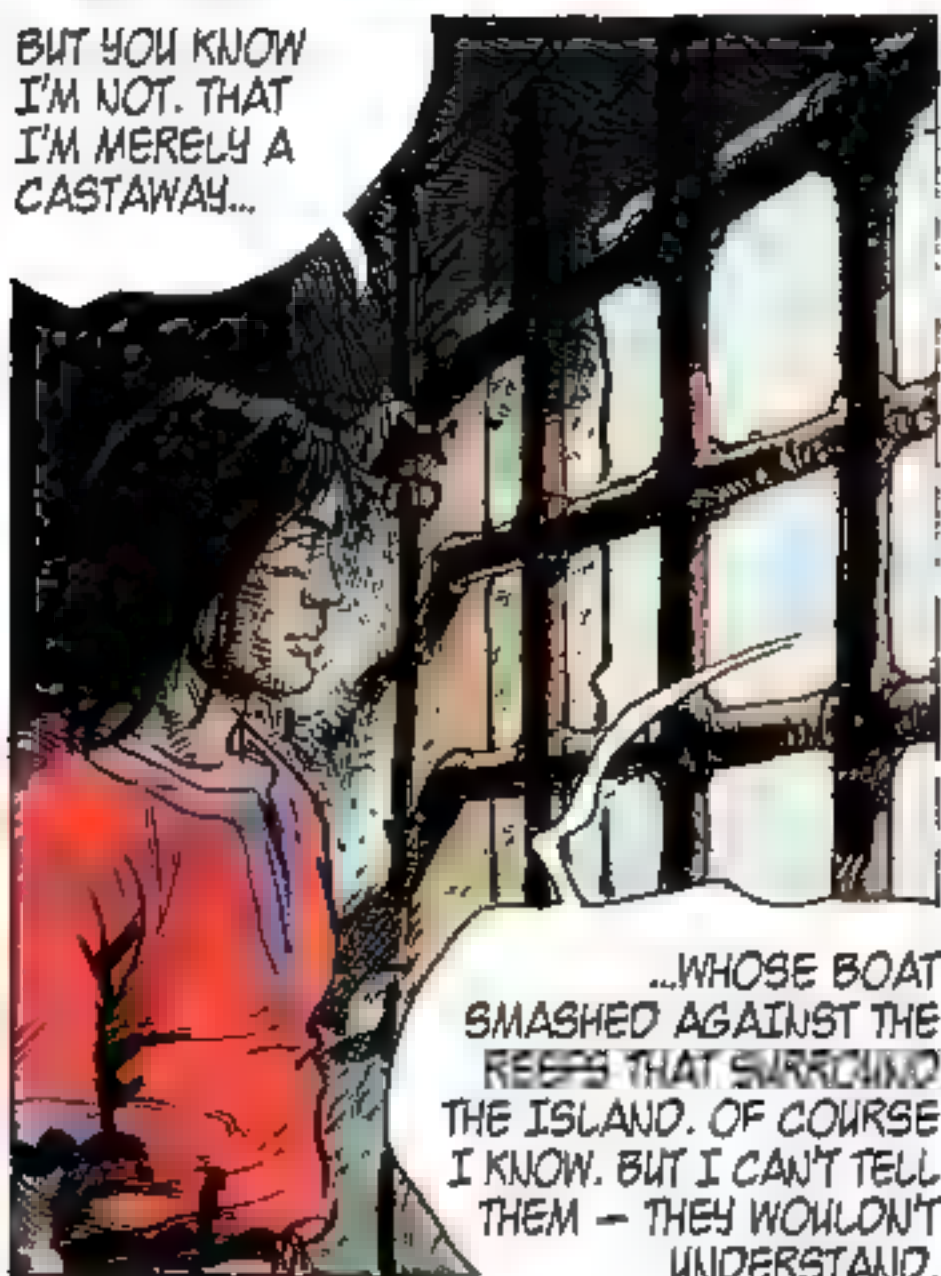
WHY SHOULD I? FOR
OVER A THOUSAND YEARS OUR
SMALL COMMUNITY HAS LIVED
IN PEACE ON THIS LAND,
WITHOUT WAR, OR CRIMES,
OR THEFTS... IN A WARM,
FERTILE COUNTRY.



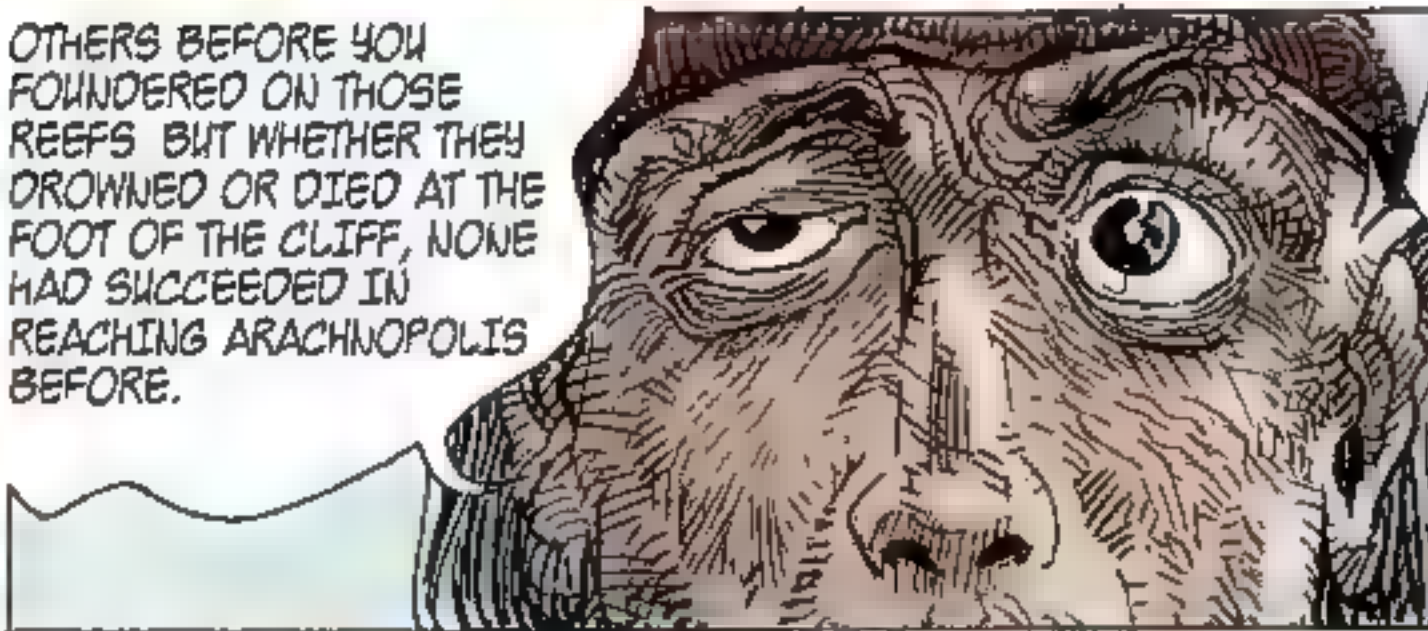
THEY HONESTLY
BELIEVE THEY ARE THE
ONLY HUMAN BEINGS
IN THE WORLD. THAT
EVERYTHING BEYOND
THE MIST IS JUST
NOTHINGNESS. THAT
IS WHY THEY THINK
YOU ARE A DEMON
WHO'S TAKEN A
HUMAN FORM.



BUT YOU KNOW
I'M NOT. THAT
I'M MERELY A
CASTAWAY...



OTHERS BEFORE YOU
FOUNDERED ON THOSE
REEFS BUT WHETHER THEY
DROWNED OR DIED AT THE
FOOT OF THE CLIFF, NONE
HAD SUCCEEDED IN
REACHING ARACHNOPSIS
BEFORE.



WELL, IT'S SIMPLE,
THEN. HELP ME
REPAIR MY BOAT
AND FREE MY LITTLE
GIRL, AND WE'LL
LEAVE WITHOUT
MAKING A
FUSS.

...WHOSE BOAT
SMASHED AGAINST THE
REEFS THAT SURROUND
THE ISLAND. OF COURSE
I KNOW. BUT I CAN'T TELL
THEM - THEY WOULDN'T
UNDERSTAND.



IMPOSSIBLE. YOUR
DAUGHTER ENTERED
ARACHNEA'S LOWER
KINGDOM. SHE CAN
NEVER LEAVE AGAIN.

SHE DIDN'T DO ANYTHING, DAMMIT! WOLFCLUB JUST STEPPED INSIDE A CAVE IN THE CLIFF FACE, AND NOW SOME SORT OF INVISIBLE BARRIER IS KEEPING HER INSIDE. THERE HAS TO BE A WAY, A SPELL, TO GET HER OUT.



THERE ARE NONE, MY POOR FELLOW.

THE LOWER KINGDOM HAS SEVERAL ENTRANCES, BUT NO EXITS. YOUR DAUGHTER IS DOOMED.



NEVER! SHOW ME ONE OF THOSE ENTRANCES, GIVE ME A WEAPON, AND I WILL GET HER OUT OF THERE, MAGICAL DOOR OR NOT. AND TO START WITH, WHAT EXACTLY IS THAT LOWER KINGDOM THAT SEEMS TO TERRIFY YOU ALL SO MUCH?

IT'S AN UNDERGROUND WORLD FILLED WITH DEMONS AND SORCERIES, OVER WHICH REIGNS ARACHNEA, THE GUARDIAN GODDESS OF OUR PEOPLE. THE TRUTH IS, WE KNOW NOTHING OF IT, FOR THOSE WHO ENTER IT NEVER RETURN.



AND WHO DO YOU SEND DOWN THERE? CRIMINALS?

SOMETIMES. AND ALSO HER HUSBANDS.

HUSBANDS?



IN EXCHANGE FOR HER BLESSINGS, ARACHNEA DEMANDS THAT WE PROVIDE HER WITH A CONSORT TWICE A YEAR, ON THE EQUINOXES OF SPRING AND AUTUMN. A MAN YOUNG AND STRONG TO IMPREGATE HER AND GIVE HER THE ENERGY SHE NEEDS.

AND WHAT HAPPENS TO THOSE LUCKY GROOMS?

I DO NOT KNOW. LEGEND HAS IT THAT THE GODDESS DEVOURS THEM AFTER CONSUMMATING THEIR UNION. TWICE A YEAR, THEN, I MUST CHOOSE ONE OF OUR BOYS, WHO HAS THE HONOUR OF SACRIFICING HIMSELF TO ENSURE THE SURVIVAL OF OUR LITTLE COMMUNITY.



FOR LEGEND ALSO CLAIMS THAT SHOULD ARACHNEA NOT SEE HER HUSBAND ARRIVE EXACTLY WHEN HE MUST, SHE WILL RELEASE THE DEMONS OF THE LOWER KINGDOM, AND OUR LAND WILL SINK BENEATH THE WAVES IN A TERRIFYING CATACLYSM.



AND HERE'S ME THINKING HUMAN SACRIFICES HAD GONE OUT OF FASHION...

NO MATTER, KING DRAGON. SEND ME INTO THAT LOWER KINGDOM, AND I WILL PROVE TO YOU ALL THAT A MAN CAN LEAVE IT - ALIVE.



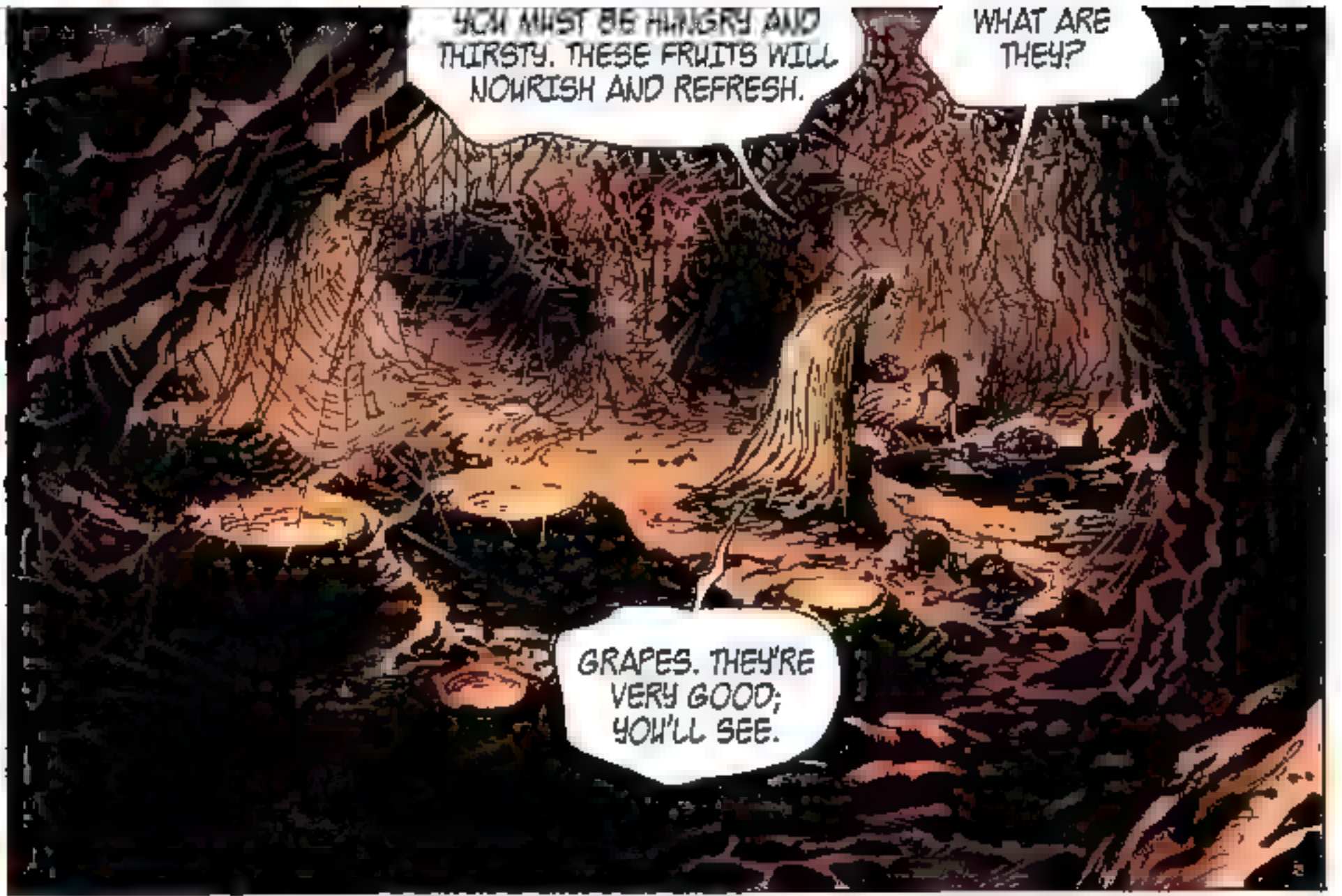
SO BE IT, PRESUMPTUOUS STRANGER. SINCE YOU'RE VOLUNTEERING...

TONIGHT IS THE NIGHT OF THE EQUINOX, AND YOU SHALL BE ARACHNEA'S NEXT HUSBAND!





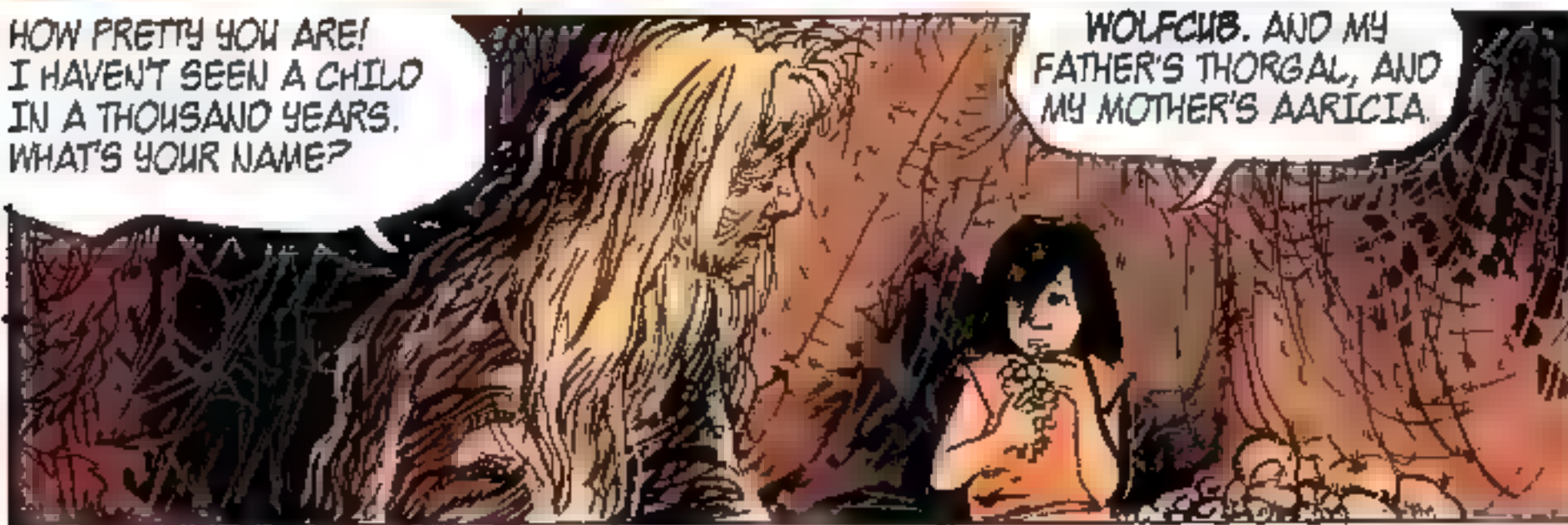
YOU'LL BE
SAFE HERE.



YOU MUST BE HUNGRY AND
THIRSTY. THESE FRUITS WILL
NOURISH AND REFRESH.

WHAT ARE
THEY?

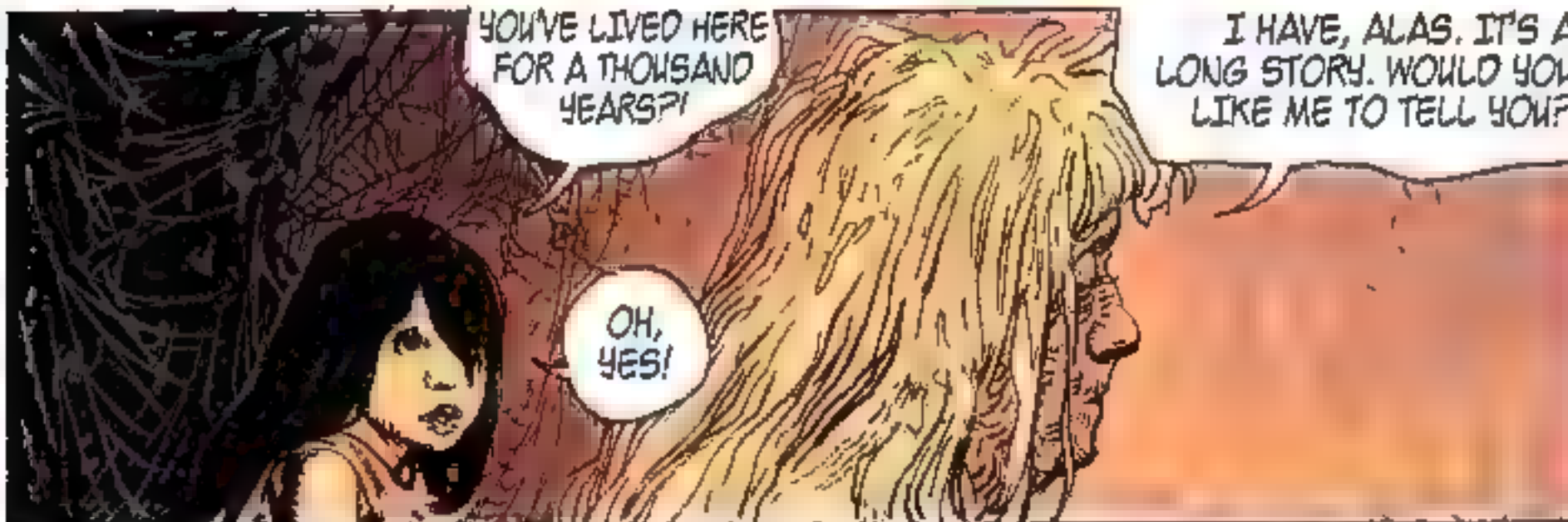
GRAPES. THEY'RE
VERY GOOD;
YOU'LL SEE.



HOW PRETTY YOU ARE!
I HAVEN'T SEEN A CHILD
IN A THOUSAND YEARS.
WHAT'S YOUR NAME?

WOLFCHUB. AND MY
FATHER'S THORGAL, AND
MY MOTHER'S AARICIA.

A LITTLE OVER A THOUSAND YEARS AGO,
A YOUNG PRINCE, FLEEING HIS WAR-TORN
COUNTRY, SAILED AWAY WITH A FEW COMPANIONS
IN SEARCH OF A DISTANT LAND WHERE
HE COULD LIVE IN PEACE. ON THEIR SHIP
THEY TOOK A FEW HEADS OF LIVESTOCK,
SOME WHEAT SEEDS, VINE STOCKS AND
OLIVE TREE SEEDLINGS...



YOU'VE LIVED HERE
FOR A THOUSAND
YEARS?

I HAVE, ALAS. IT'S A
LONG STORY. WOULD YOU
LIKE ME TO TELL YOU?

OH,
YES!



THE PRINCE'S NAME WAS
DRACON. HIS WIFE HAD DIED
RECENTLY, AND ALL HE HAD WAS
HIS ONLY DAUGHTER, SERENA,
WHOM HE ADORED.



DRACON WAS A MAN OF GREAT
BRAVERY WHO FEARED ONLY ONE
THING. SPIDERS...

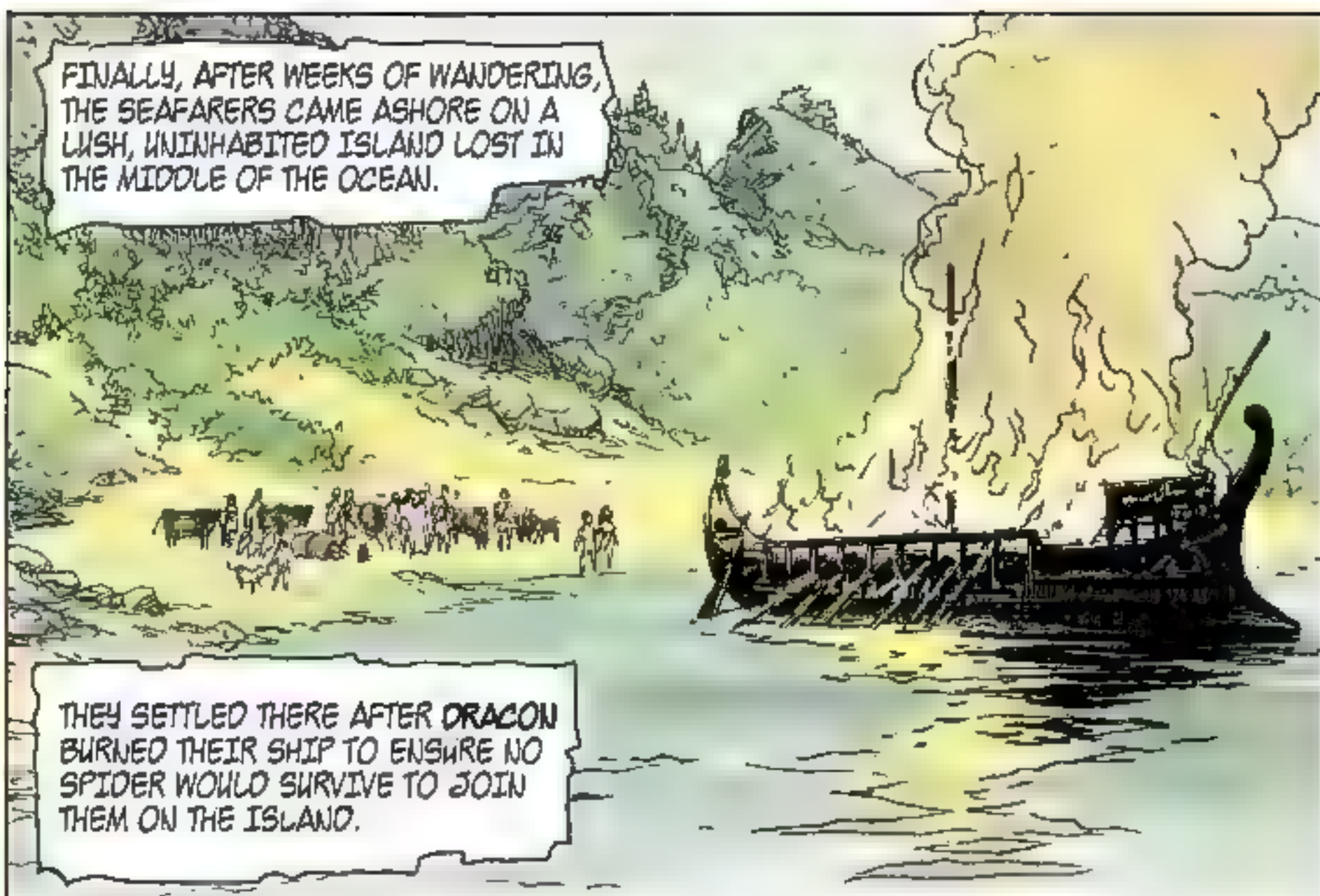
...FOR UPON HIS BIRTH,
A SEER HAD FORESEEN
THAT HE'D BECOME KING
OF AN ENCHANTED LAND,
BUT THAT A SPIDER
WOULD BRING TRAGEDY
TO HIM AND HIS PEOPLE.

23

SO, DURING THE TRIP, HE FORCED HIS CREW TO HUNT AND DESTROY EVERY SPIDER ON THE SHIP. AWARE OF THE PROPHECY, HIS COMPANIONS WERE ONLY TOO HAPPY TO COMPLY.



FINALLY, AFTER WEEKS OF WANDERING, THE SEAFARERS CAME ASHORE ON A LUSH, UNINHABITED ISLAND LOST IN THE MIDDLE OF THE OCEAN.



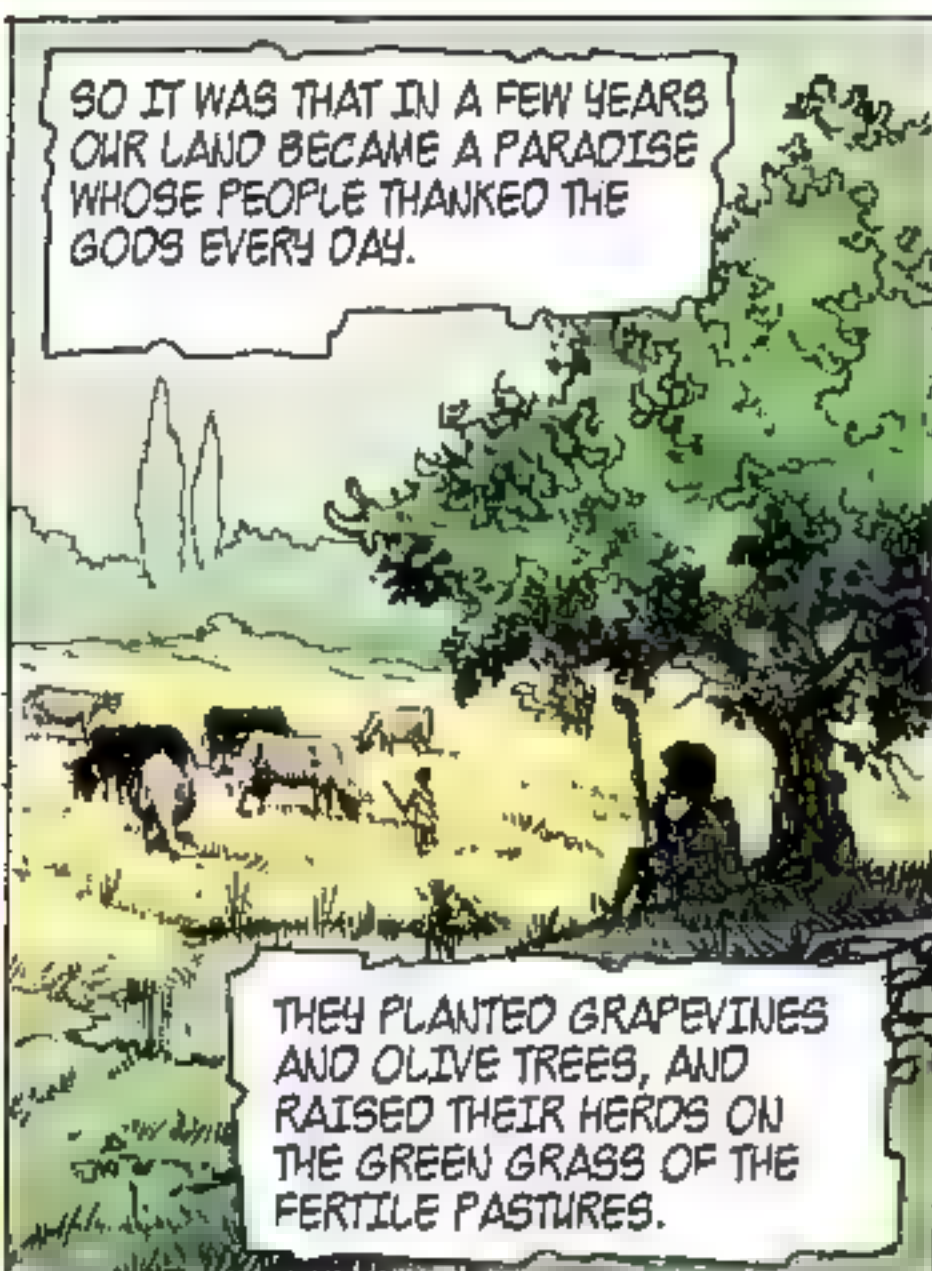
THEY SETTLED THERE AFTER DRAGON BURNED THEIR SHIP TO ENSURE NO SPIDER WOULD SURVIVE TO JOIN THEM ON THE ISLAND.

THEY CALLED THEIR NEW HOME OUR LAND AND DRAGON DECLARED HIMSELF ITS KING.



THEN THEY BUILT A VILLAGE, WHICH THEY NAMED SERENAPOLIS TO HONOUR THE LITTLE PRINCESS.

SO IT WAS THAT IN A FEW YEARS OUR LAND BECAME A PARADISE WHOSE PEOPLE THANKED THE GODS EVERY DAY.



THEY PLANTED GRAPEVINES AND OLIVE TREES, AND RAISED THEIR HERDS ON THE GREEN GRASS OF THE FERTILE PASTURES.

HAVING GROWN UP, SERENA HAD BECOME A DAZZLING BEAUTY. EYES BRIGHT AS STARS, SKIN LIKE ALABASTER, HAIR GOLDEN LIKE THE SUN... SHE RADIATED A LIGHT THAT SEEMED ALMOST OTHER-WORLDBLY...

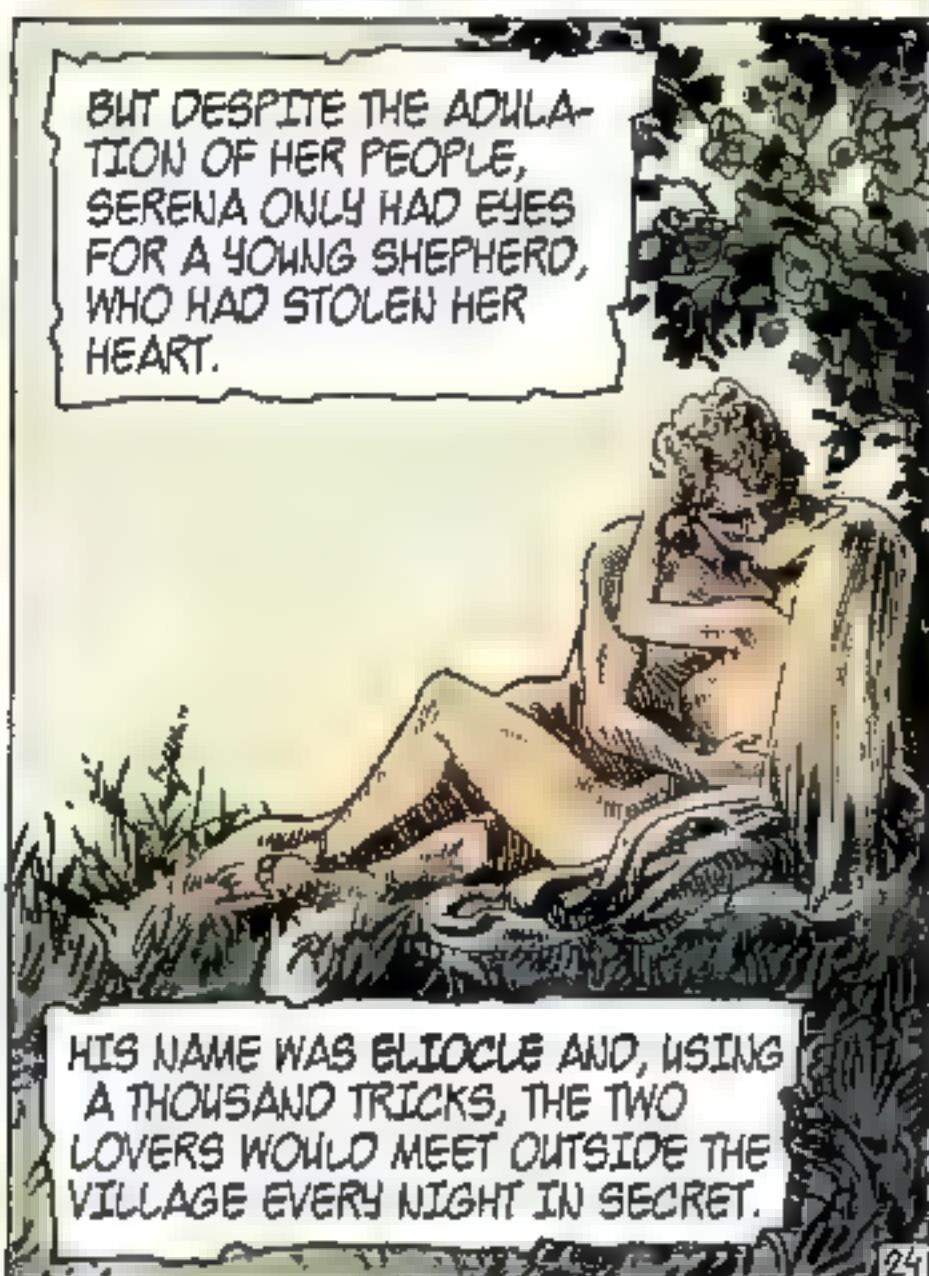


...AND OUR LAND'S SMALL COMMUNITY BEGAN TO WORSHIP HER LIKE A DIVINE BEING.

THEY EVEN TOOK TO BRINGING THEIR YOUNG GODDESS OFFERINGS TWICE A YEAR, ON THE SPRING AND AUTUMN EQUINOXES.



BUT DESPITE THE ADULATION OF HER PEOPLE, SERENA ONLY HAD EYES FOR A YOUNG SHEPHERD, WHO HAD STOLEN HER HEART.



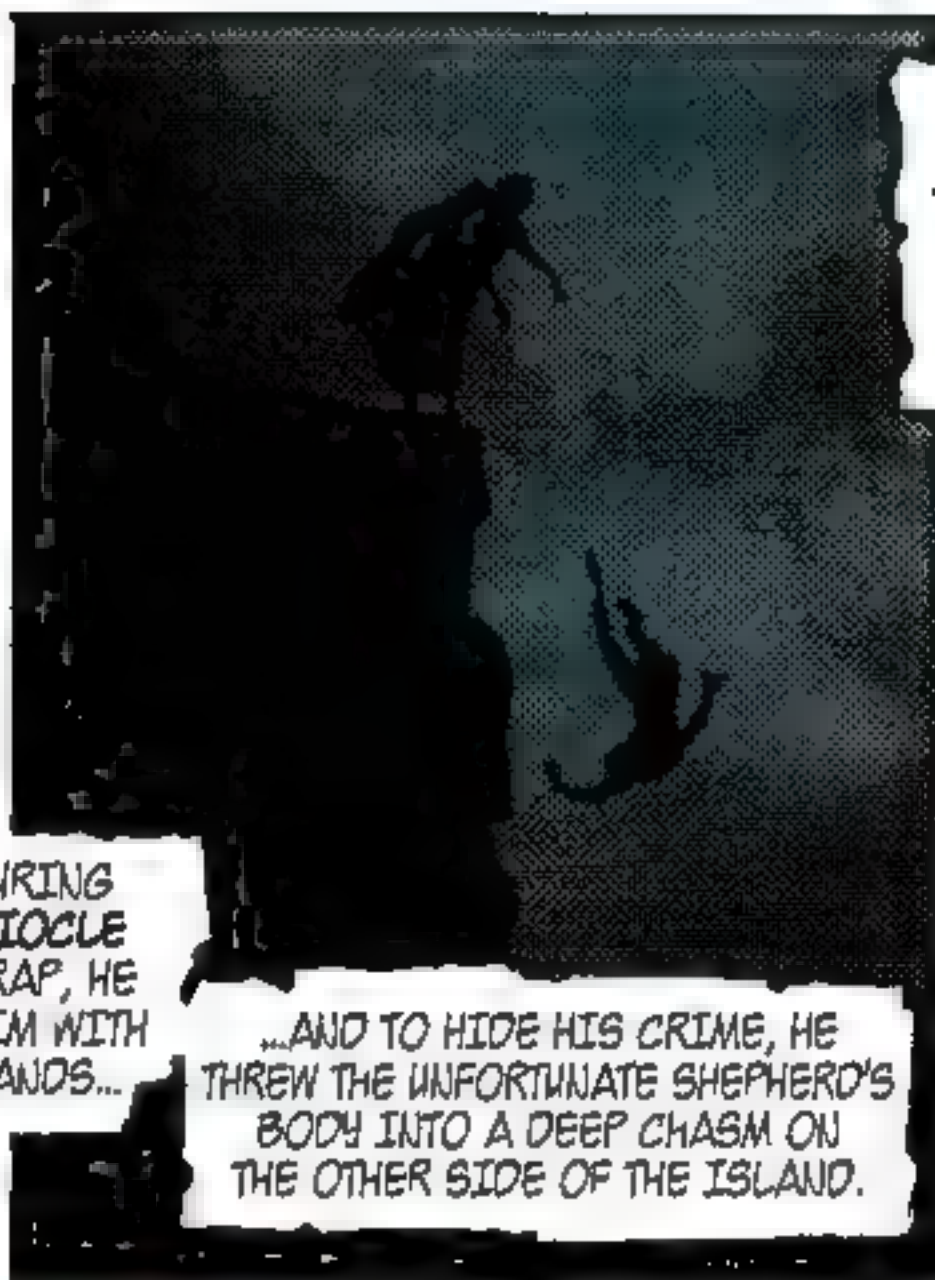
HIS NAME WAS ELIOCLE AND, USING A THOUSAND TRICKS, THE TWO LOVERS WOULD MEET OUTSIDE THE VILLAGE EVERY NIGHT IN SECRET.

WHEN DRACON FOUND OUT, HE FLEW INTO A BLIND RAGE AT THE THOUGHT THAT ANY MAN BUT HIM COULD HAVE THE LOVE OF HIS CHERISHED DAUGHTER.



AFTER LURING POOR ELIOCLE INTO A TRAP, HE KILLED HIM WITH HIS OWN HANDS...

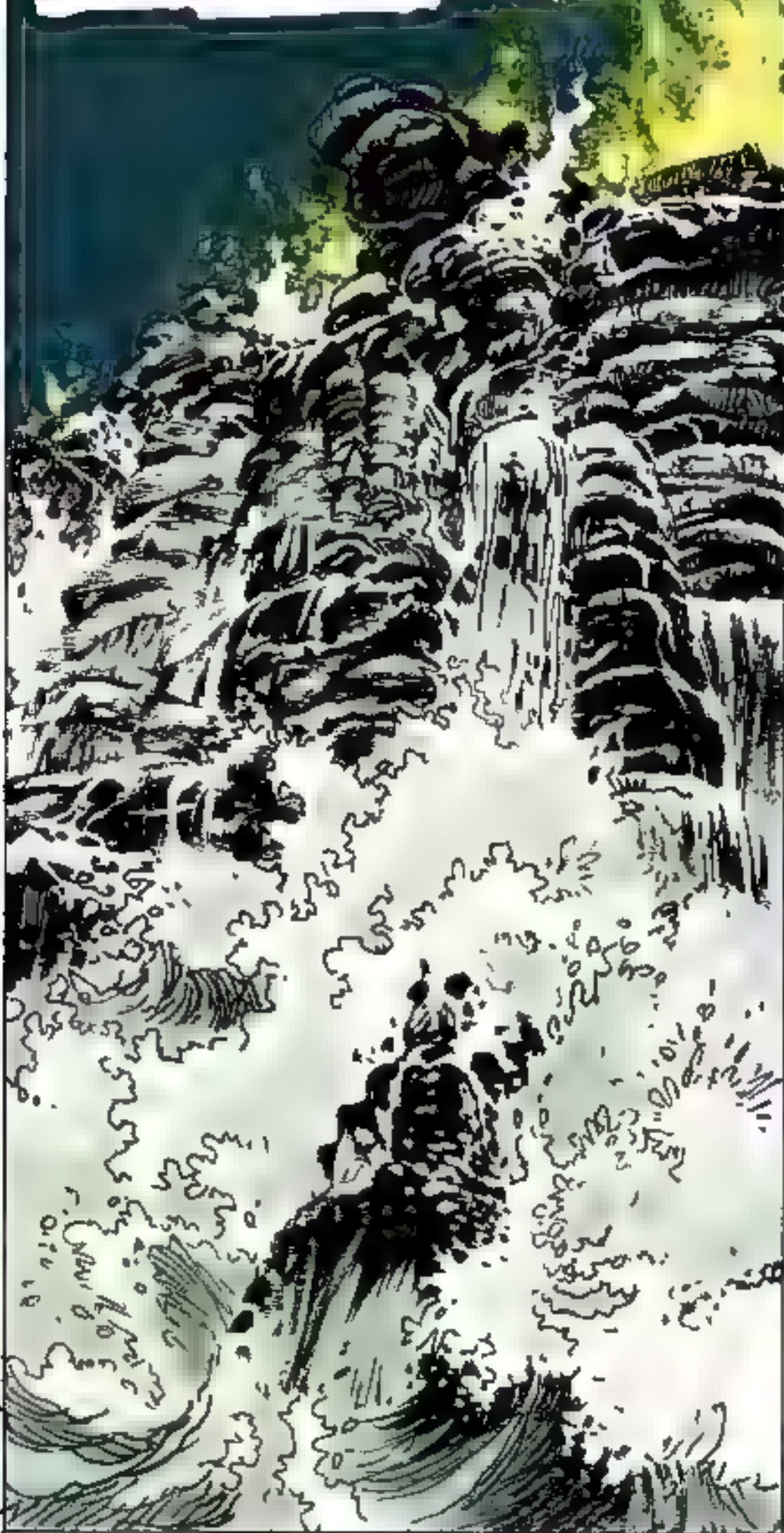
...AND TO HIDE HIS CRIME, HE THREW THE UNFORTUNATE SHEPHERD'S BODY INTO A DEEP CHASM ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE ISLAND.



THEN, AFTER SPENDING THE NIGHT GETTING DRUNK ON WINE, HE DARED TO CALL OUT TO THE GODS. HE DEMANDED THAT SERENA, WHOSE STUNNING BEAUTY, IN HIS MIND, COULD ONLY COME FROM DIVINE ESSENCE, RECEIVE THE IMMORTALITY SHE WAS ENTITLED TO.



NO SOONER HAD DRACON UTTERED THOSE BLASPHEMOUS WORDS THAN A TERRIBLE EARTHQUAKE LIFTED THE ENTIRE ISLAND WHILE HIGH STONE WALLS SPRANG FROM THE SEA TO ENCLOSE THE LAND ENTIRELY.



THE KING'S PALACE, THE GODS' TEMPLES, THE HOUSES OF SERENAPOLIS COLLAPSED, AND A DEADLY RAIN OF FLAMING ROCKS FELL UPON THE TERRIFIED INHABITANTS.



THIS, IN MERE MOMENTS, THE WORK OF SO MANY YEARS OF TOIL WAS TURNED TO ASHES, RUINS AND DESOLATION.

WHEN DAWN CAME, A DAZED DRACON SEARCHED THE RUBBLE OF HIS PALACE, LOOKING FOR HIS BELOVED DAUGHTER. AND WHEN HE FINALLY FOUND HER...



...ALL HE COULD DO WAS SCREAM IN HORROR.





WHY? WHAT
HAPPENED?

POOR SERENA HAD BEEN TURNED
INTO AN ABOMINABLE MONSTER,
HALF WOMAN HALF SPIDER. WHEN
SHE SPOKE, DRACON RECOGNISED
THE VOICE HE'D SO JEALOUSLY
CHERISHED, AND COLLAPSED
IN TEARS.

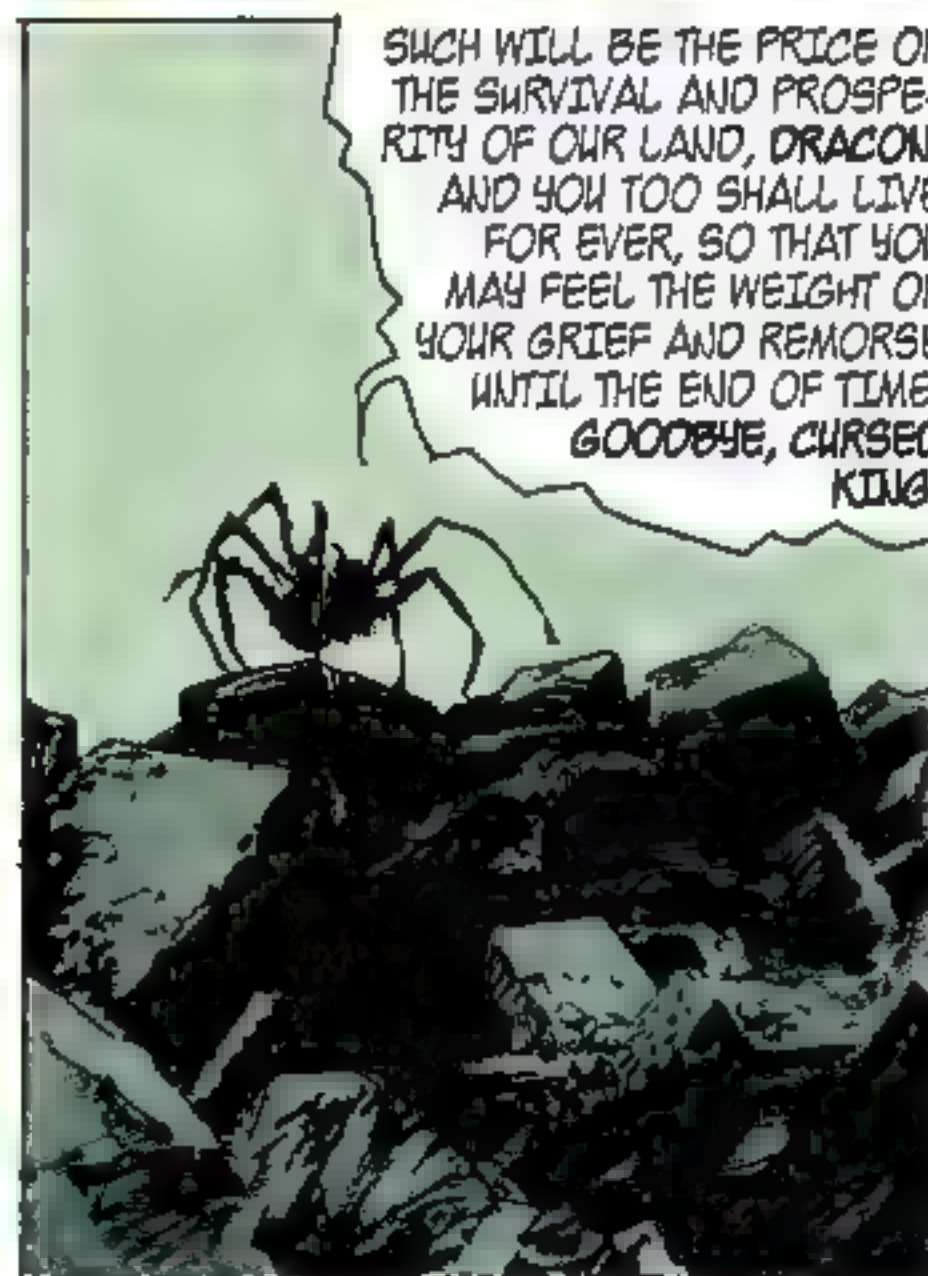


THE GODS GRANTED ME THE
IMMORTALITY YOU HAD THE
ARROGANCE TO DEMAND OF
THEM, DRACON. BUT THEY
CONDEMNED ME TO ETERNAL
LIFE IN THIS HIDEOUS
GUISE, TO PUNISH YOU FOR
YOUR CRIME AND YOUR
BLASPHEMY.



I WILL LIVE FOR EVER, BUT
UNDERGROUND, WHERE YOU CAST
THE BODY OF MY BELOVED AFTER
MURDERING HIM SO COWARDLY.
I SHALL RULE OVER THE LOWER
KINGDOM AS ARACHNEA!

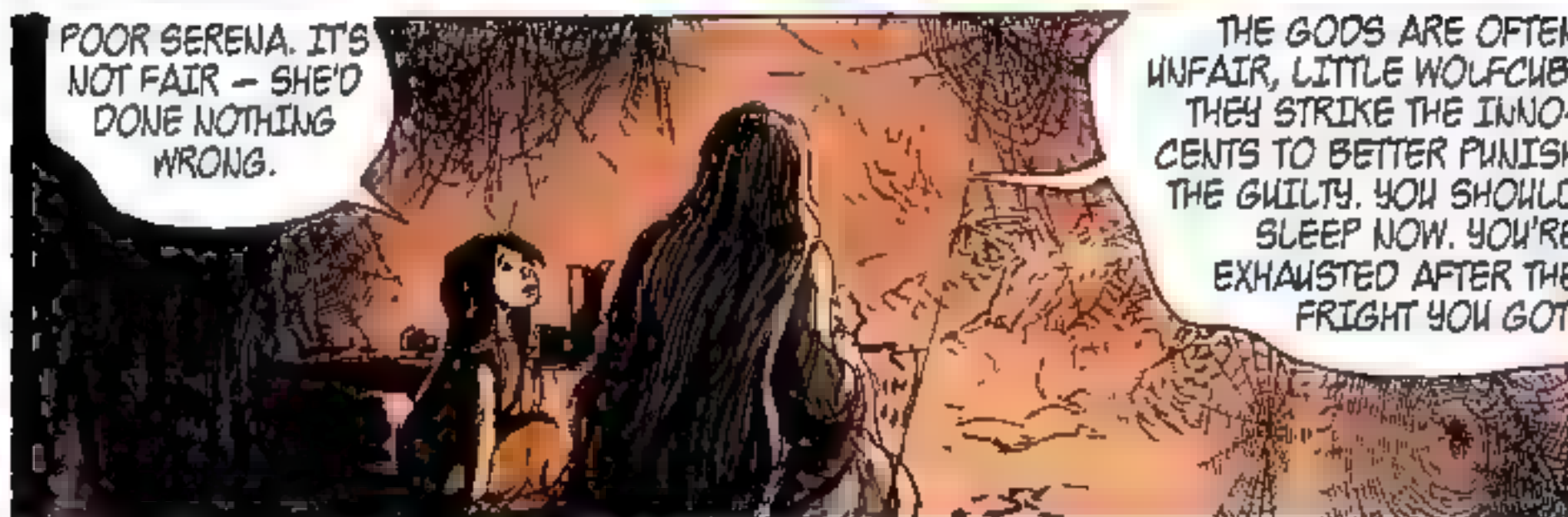
YOU WILL BUILD ME A TEMPLE AT THE ENTRANCE
TO MY KINGDOM. AND EVERY EQUINOX YOU WILL
SACRIFICE A STRONG YOUNG MAN TO BE MY
HUSBAND. AS YOU SACRIFICED THE ONE WHO
SHOULD HAVE BEEN MINE IN MY EARTHLY LIFE



SUCH WILL BE THE PRICE OF
THE SURVIVAL AND PROSPERITY
OF OUR LAND, DRACON.
AND YOU TOO SHALL LIVE
FOR EVER, SO THAT YOU
MAY FEEL THE WEIGHT OF
YOUR GRIEF AND REMORSE
UNTIL THE END OF TIME.
GOODBYE, CURSED
KING!



AND SO IT WAS FOR A
THOUSAND YEARS, IGNORANT
OF THE REST OF THE WORLD,
THE PEOPLE OF OUR LAND HAVE
WORSHIPPED ARACHNEA BY
SACRIFICING THE STRONGEST
MEN OF OUR COMMUNITY TO
HER TWICE A YEAR.



POOR SERENA. IT'S
NOT FAIR - SHE'D
DONE NOTHING
WRONG.

THE GODS ARE OFTEN
UNFAIR, LITTLE WOLFCUB.
THEY STRIKE THE INNO-
CENTS TO BETTER PUNISH
THE GUILTY. YOU SHOULD
SLEEP NOW. YOU'RE
EXHAUSTED AFTER THE
FRIGHT YOU GOT.



BUT... WHO ARE
YOU, IN ALL
THIS?

I WILL TELL
YOU LATER. SLEEP
IN PEACE, CHILD.
I'LL WATCH
OVER YOU.

26



MY BROTHERS, THIS MAN IS NOT A DEMON BUT HAS BEEN SENT BY THE GODS TO BE, ON THIS NIGHT OF THE EQUINOX, THE NEW HUSBAND OF OUR BELOVED ARACHNEA. HIS NAME IS THORGAL. PRAISE HIM! GLORY BE TO OUR GUARDIAN GODDESS!



PRAISE THORGAL!

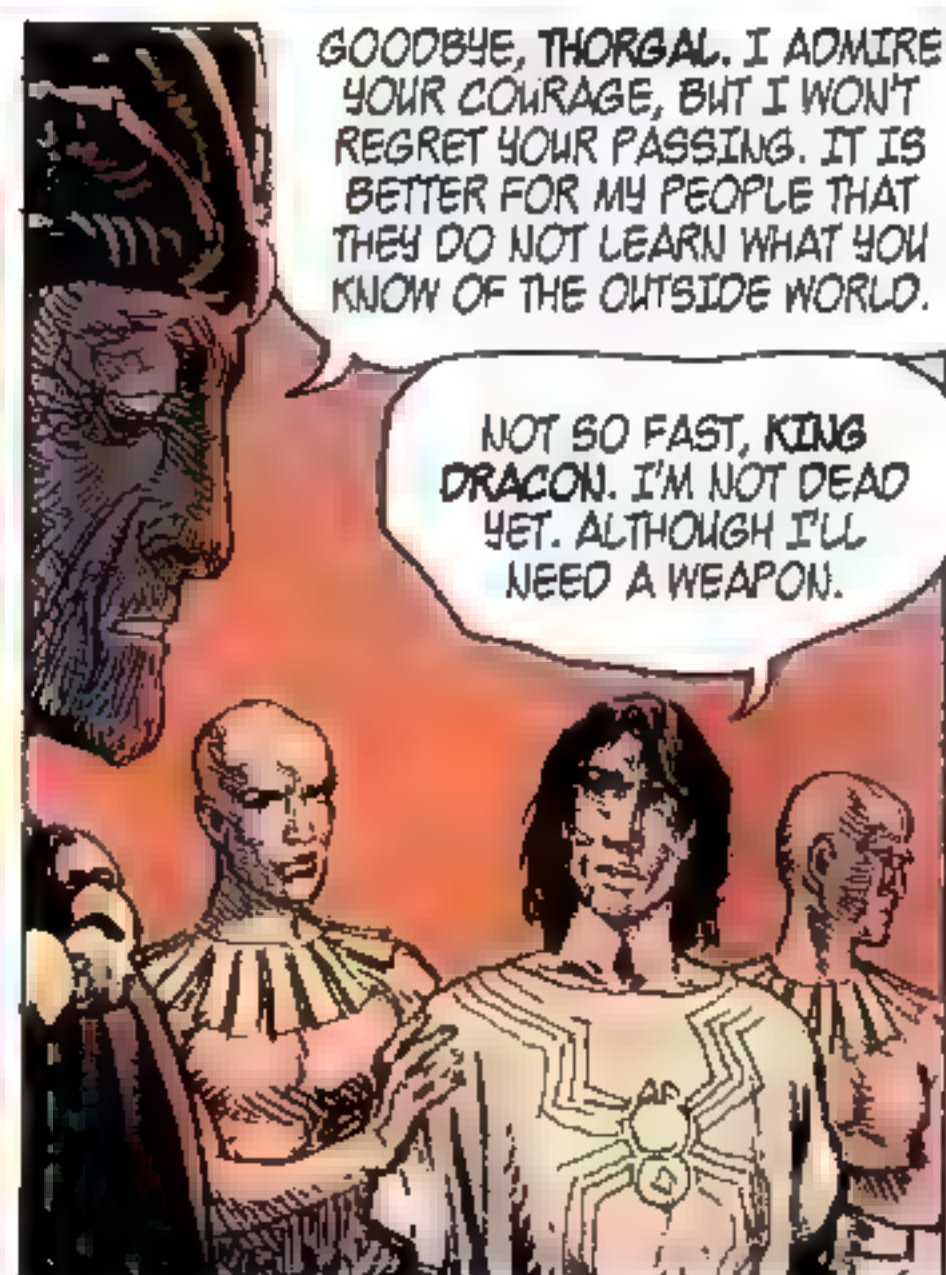
GLORY TO ARACHNEA!

PRAISE THORGAL!

GLORY TO ARACHNEA!



OPEN THE GATES TO THE LOWER KINGDOM!



GOODBYE, THORGAL. I ADMIRE YOUR COURAGE, BUT I WON'T REGRET YOUR PASSING. IT IS BETTER FOR MY PEOPLE THAT THEY DO NOT LEARN WHAT YOU KNOW OF THE OUTSIDE WORLD.

NOT SO FAST, KING DRAGON. I'M NOT DEAD YET. ALTHOUGH I'LL NEED A WEAPON.



WHAT FOR? A WEAPON WOULD BE OF NO USE TO YOU AGAINST THE LOWER KINGDOM'S SORCERIES

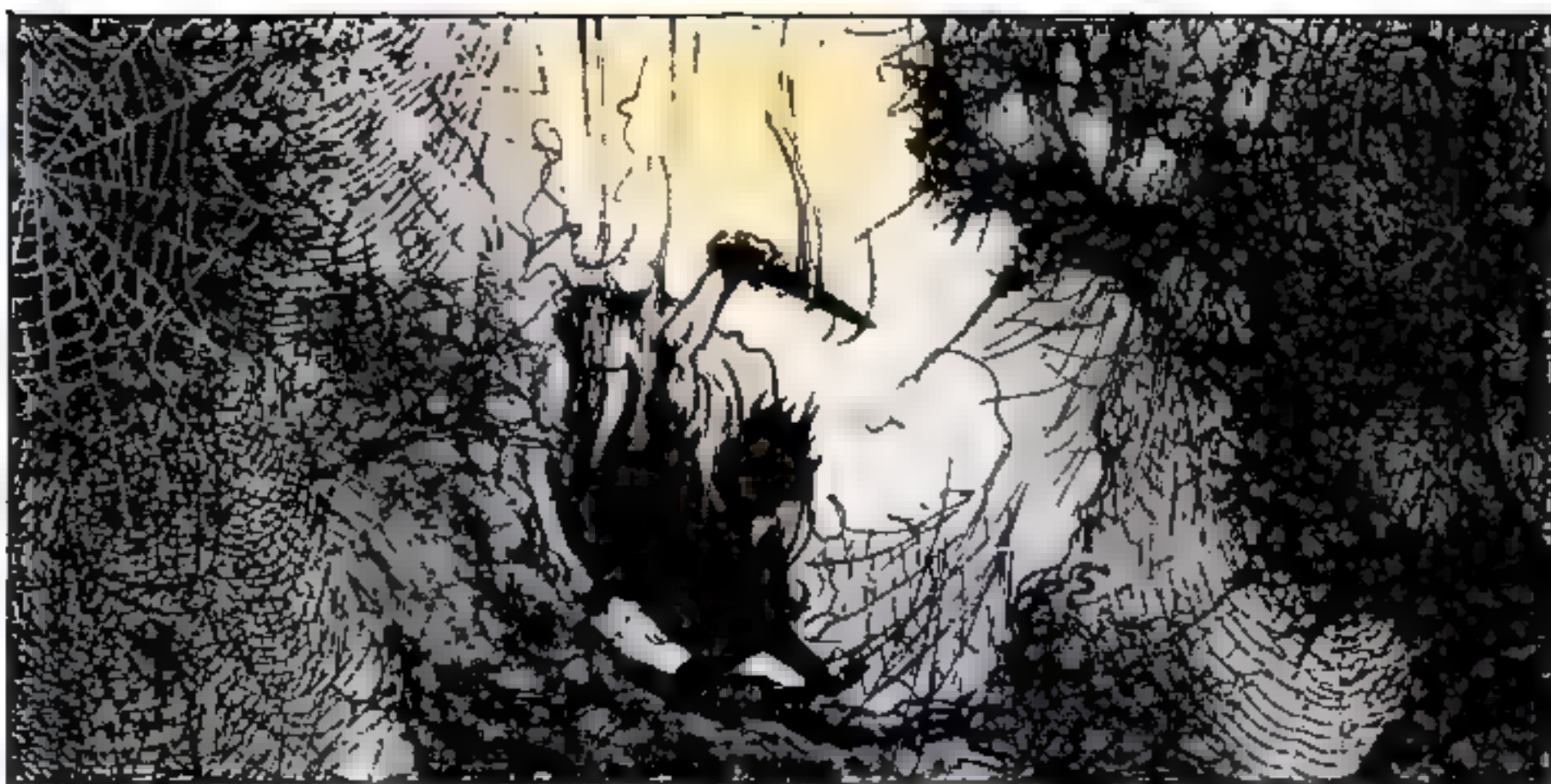
THAT'S YOUR POINT OF VIEW...



...BUT IT'S NOT MINE.



OBIIIN



LOOKS LIKE
NOTHING'S BROKEN.
I GOT OFF LIGHTLY.
OTHERS WEREN'T
SO LUCKY.



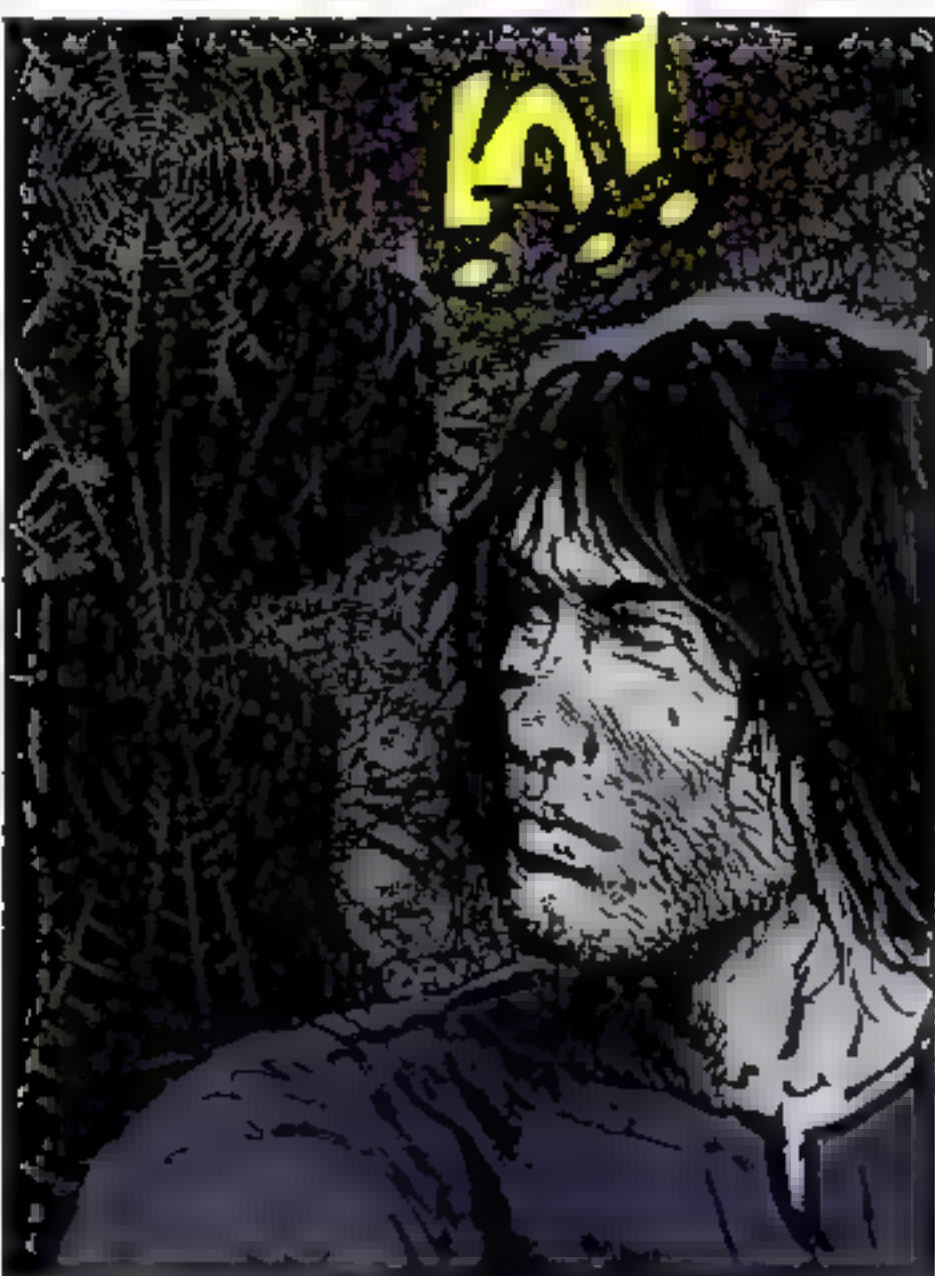
LET'S START BY
DITCHING THESE
RAGS...



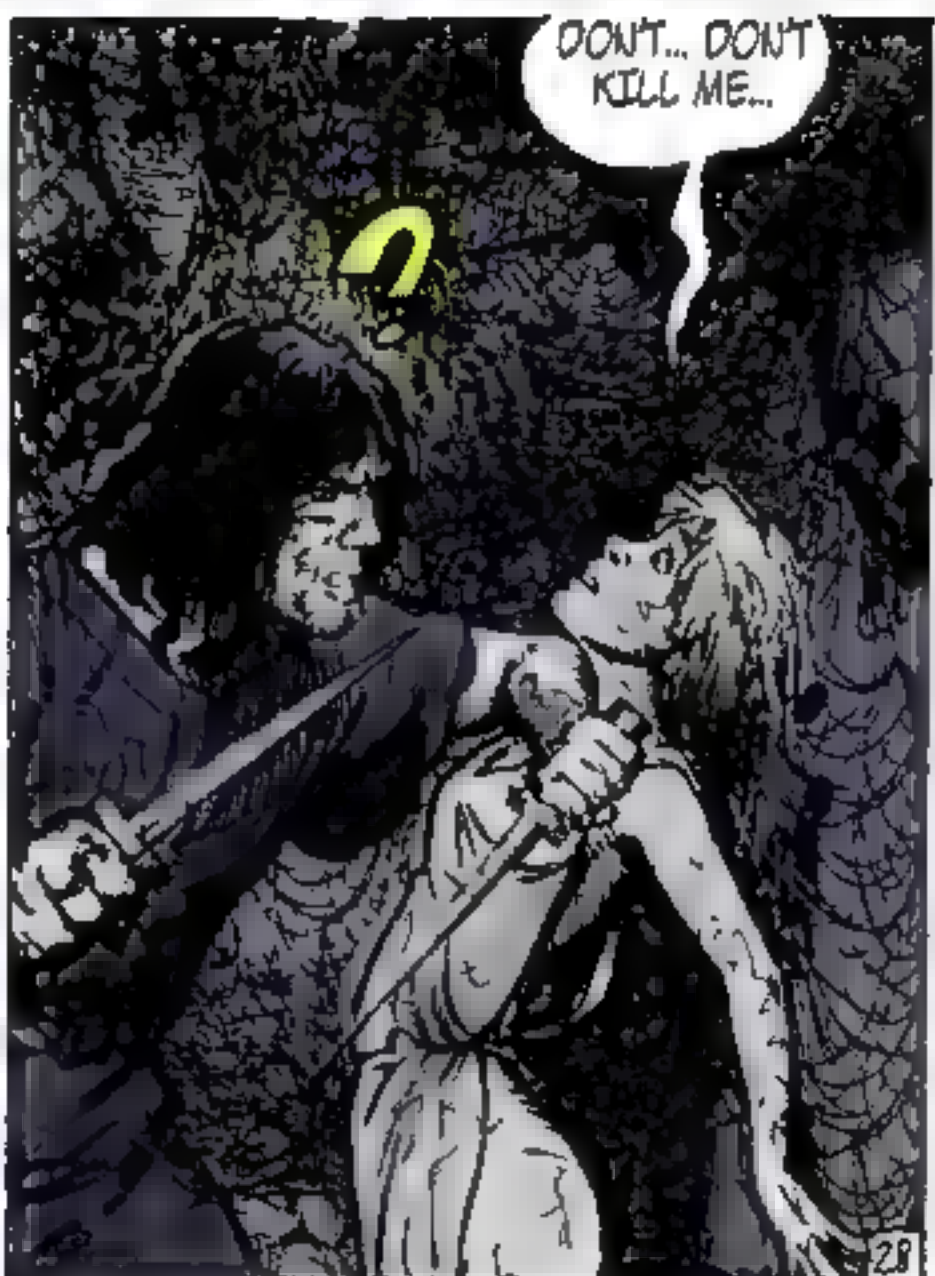
... AND BEING ON GUARD.
LADY ARACHNEA, PROVIDED
SHE'S REAL, IS UNLIKELY TO
BE THE ONLY ONE ROAMING
THIS UNDERGROUND
WORLD.



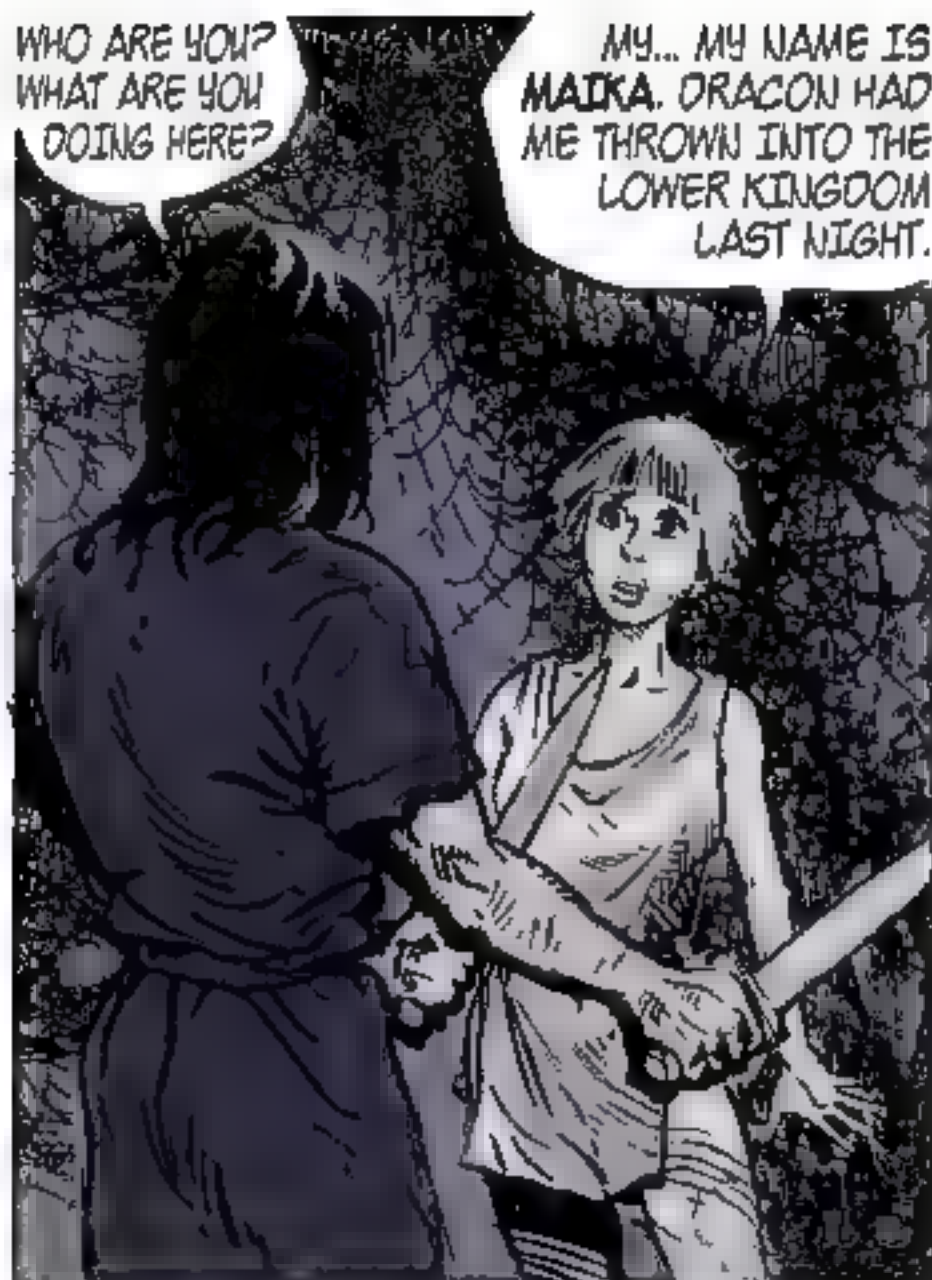
AND HERE IT BEGINS!
WHICH WAY, THEN? IF
ONLY I COULD...



LA!



DON'T... DON'T
KILL ME...



WHO ARE YOU?
WHAT ARE YOU
DOING HERE?

MY... MY NAME IS
MAIKA. DRAGON HAD
ME THROWN INTO THE
LOWER KINGDOM
LAST NIGHT.



WHY?
WHAT CRIME
DID YOU
COMMIT?

KALEOS, MY FIANCE,
HAD BEEN CHOSEN
TO BE ARACHNEA'S
CONSORT. I LOVED
HIM. I DIDN'T WANT
HIM TO DIE, SO
I HELPED HIM
ESCAPE.



BUT HE DIED
ANYWAY, SWALLOWED
BY THE MISTS OF
NOTHINGNESS.

A YOUNG MAN
WITH CURLY, FAIR
HAIR? I SAW HIS
BODY. I'M AFRAID HE
FELL OFF THE CLIFF.



THE CLIFF?

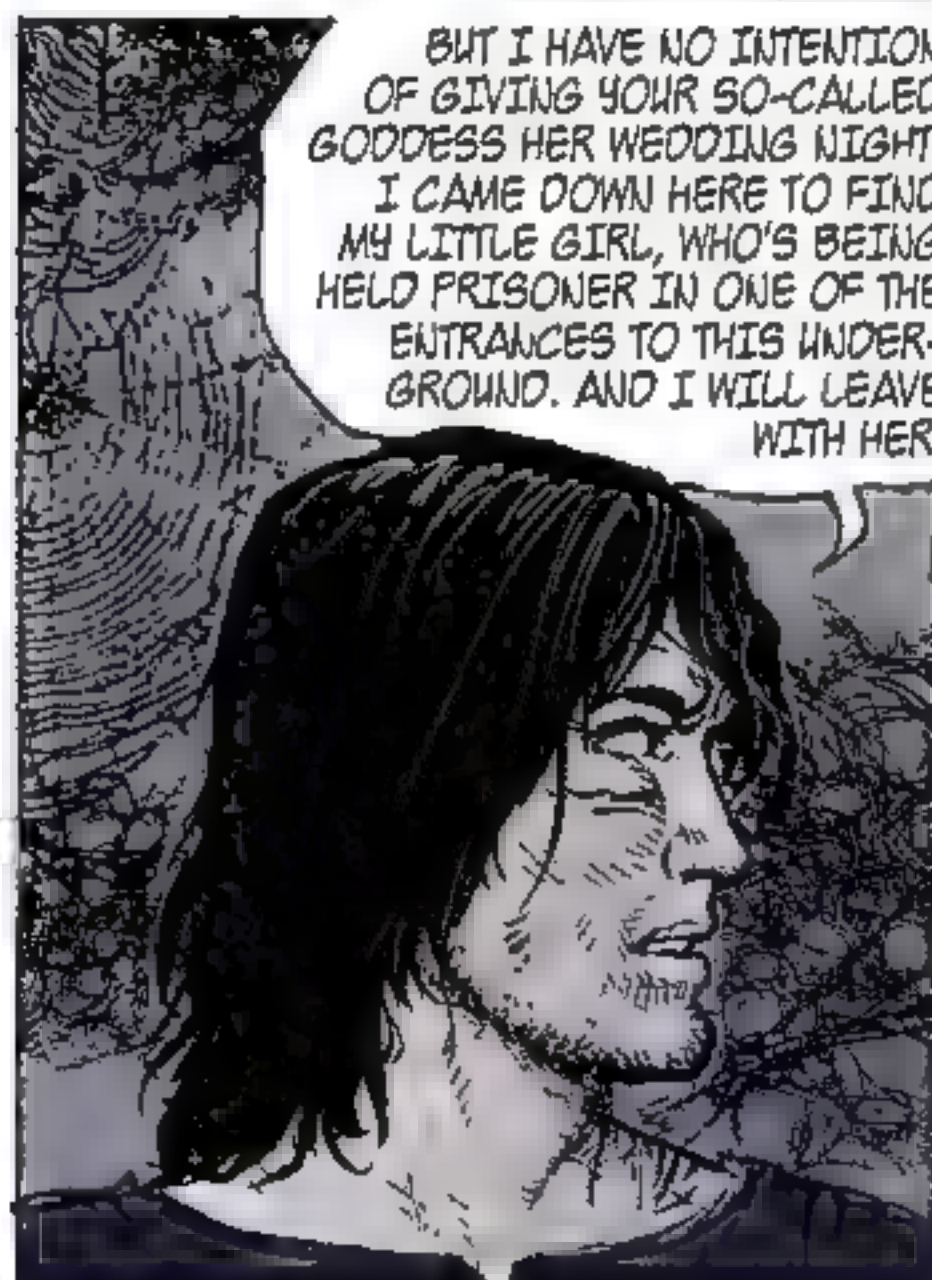
THE HIGH ROCK WALL
THAT ENCIRCLES YOUR
ISLAND, PERMANENTLY
HIDDEN BY THE STEAM
THAT RISES FROM THE
WARM SEA. SINCE DRAGON
FORBADE YOU FROM
GOING NEAR THE MIST,
YOU KNOW NOTHING
OF IT.



HOW DO YOU KNOW
THAT? AND WHO ARE
YOU? I'VE NEVER SEEN
YOU IN OUR LAND.



I'M THE ONE CHO-
SEN TO SUCCEED
YOUR FIANCE AS
ARACHNEA'S
NEXT HUSBAND.



BUT I HAVE NO INTENTION
OF GIVING YOUR SO-CALLED
GODDESS HER WEDDING NIGHT.
I CAME DOWN HERE TO FIND
MY LITTLE GIRL, WHO'S BEING
HELD PRISONER IN ONE OF THE
ENTRANCES TO THIS UNDER-
GROUND. AND I WILL LEAVE
WITH HER.

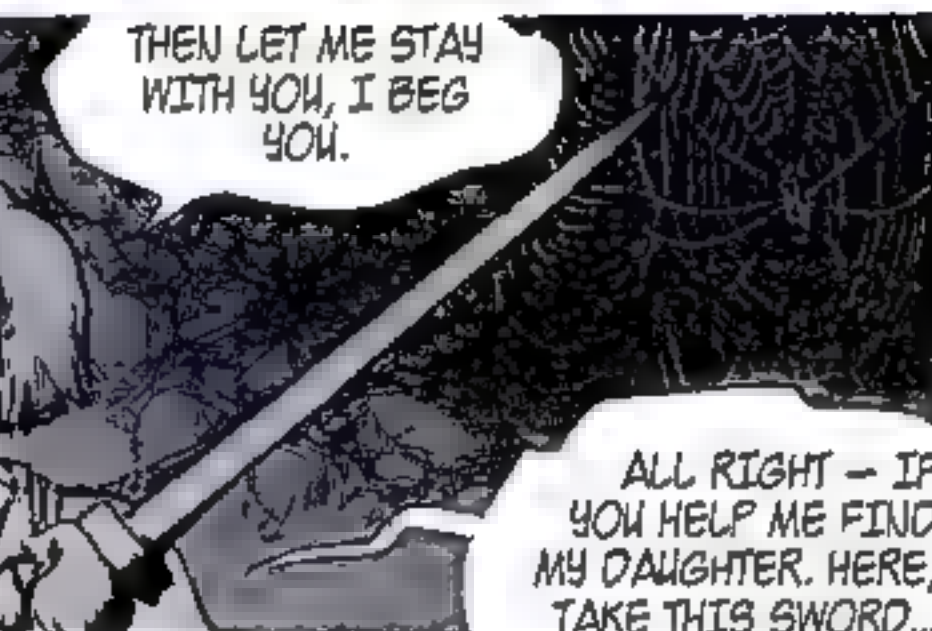


LEAVE?!... YOU
KNOW HOW TO GET
OUT OF THE LOWER
KINGDOM?!...
NO ONE'S EVER
DONE IT.

I'LL FIND
A WAY. THERE
HAS TO BE
ONE.



THEN LET ME STAY
WITH YOU, I BEG
YOU.

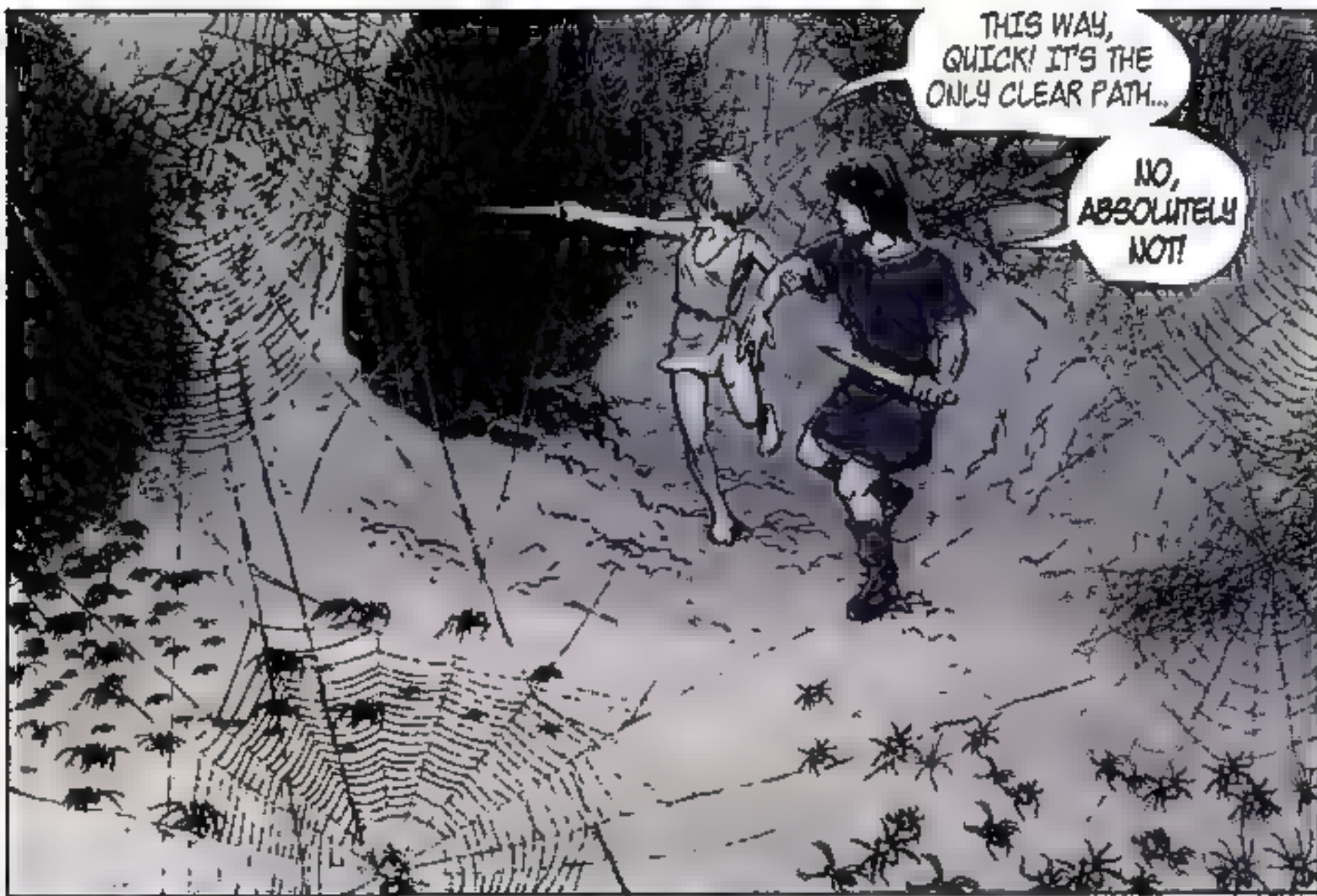


ALL RIGHT - IF
YOU HELP ME FIND
MY DAUGHTER. HERE,
TAKE THIS SWORD...



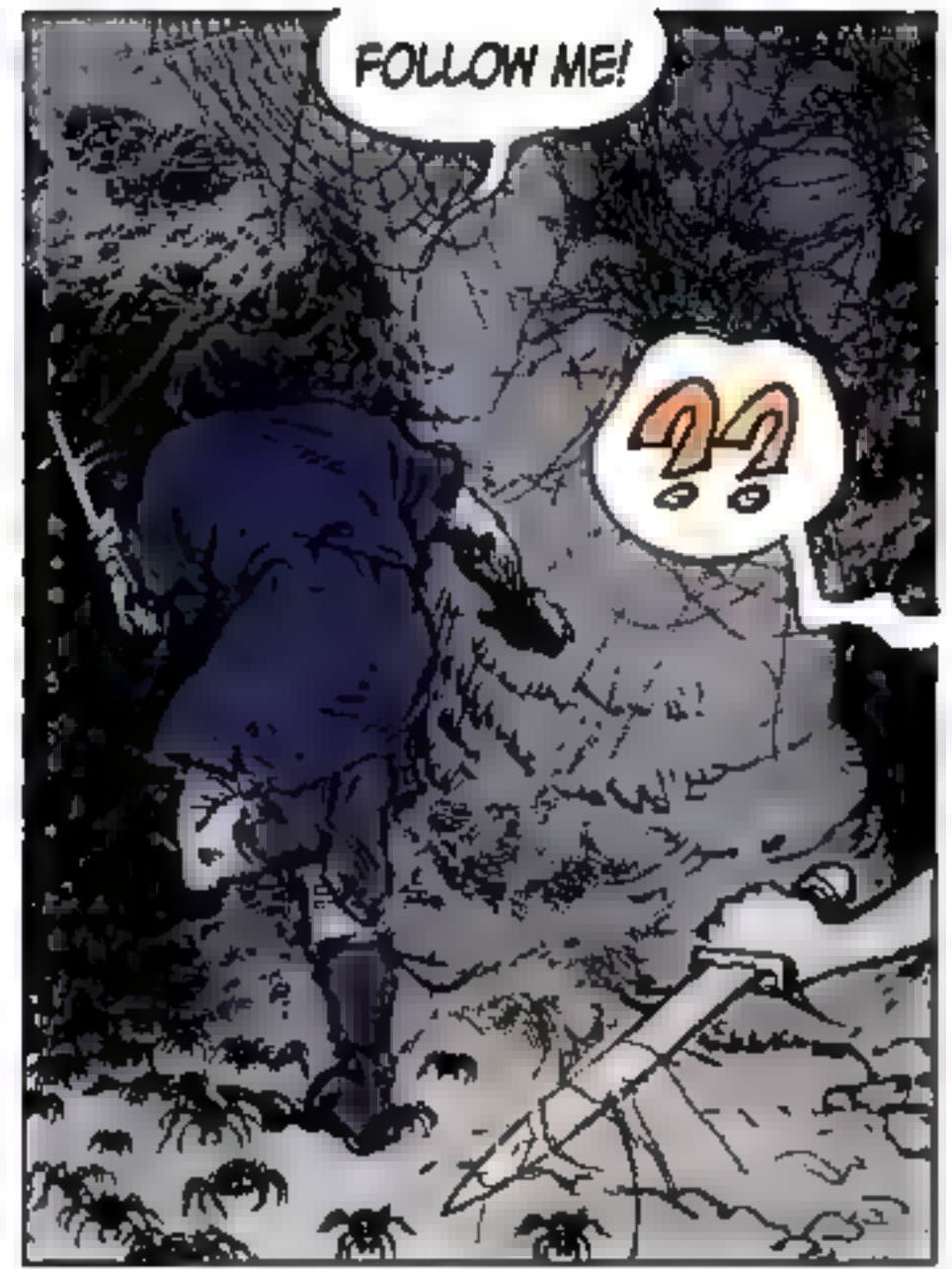
...YOU'RE
GOING TO
NEED IT.





THIS WAY,
QUICK! IT'S THE
ONLY CLEAR PATH...

NO,
ABSOLUTELY
NOT!



FOLLOW ME!

???



NO, I...
I CAN'T...
HELP ME!...

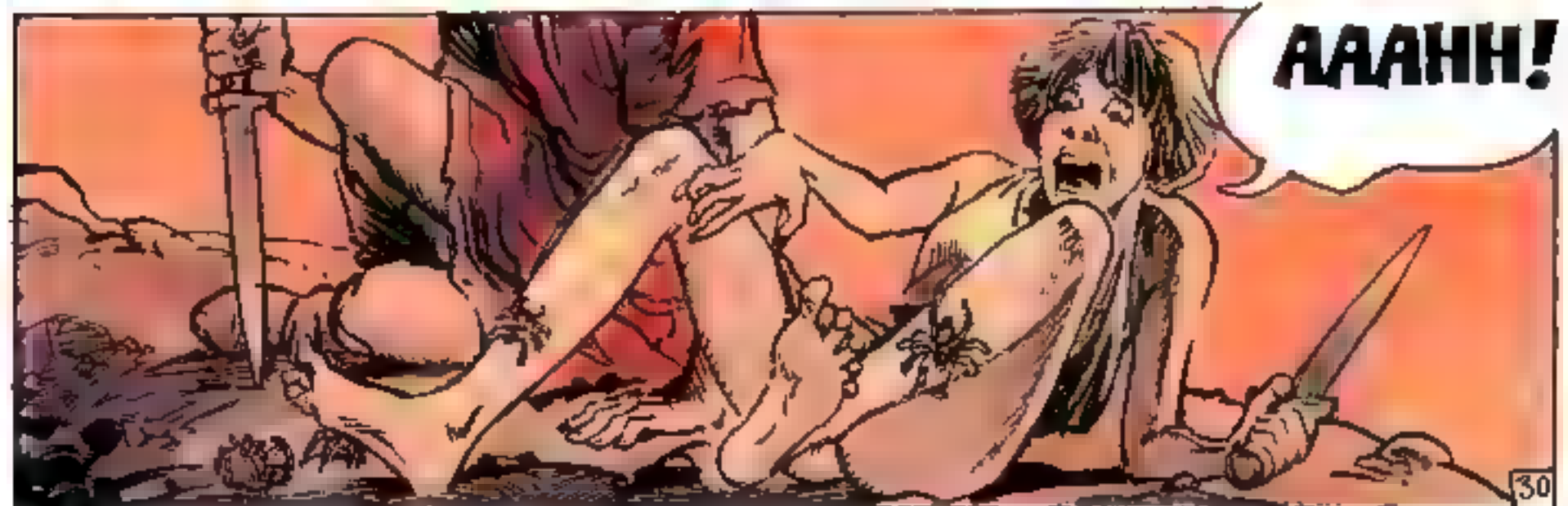


THEY... THEY'RE
COMING FROM
EVERYWHERE...
I... I CAN'T,
IT'S HOR-
RIBLE...



WE WON'T MAKE IT...
THERE ARE TOO MANY
OF THEM...

WE'LL MAKE IT.
HOLD ON!



AAAAHH!

30



THOSE THOUSANDS OF SPIDERS... HOW DREADFUL! WHY DIDN'T YOU WANT TO GO DOWN TO THE EMPTY GALLERY?

BECAUSE THAT'S WHERE THOSE DAMNED THINGS WANTED US TO GO - SO IT WAS THE ONE DIRECTION NOT TO TAKE.



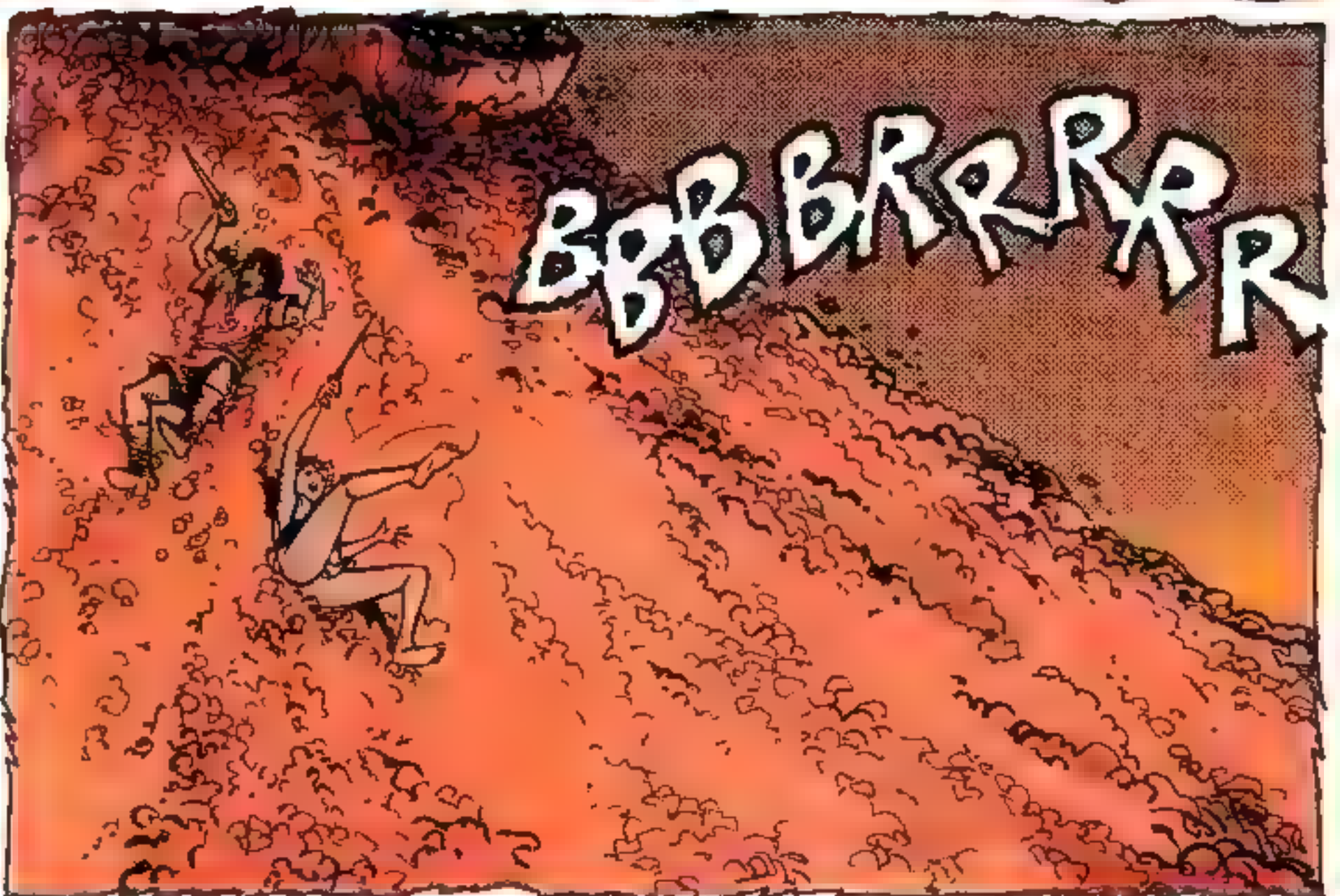
THOSE SPIDERS SEEM TO OBEY AN ORDER, LIKE ANTS. THEY'RE PROBABLY SUPPOSED TO TAKE US SOMEWHERE WE'RE EXPECTED AND...

THORGAL, LISTEN!...

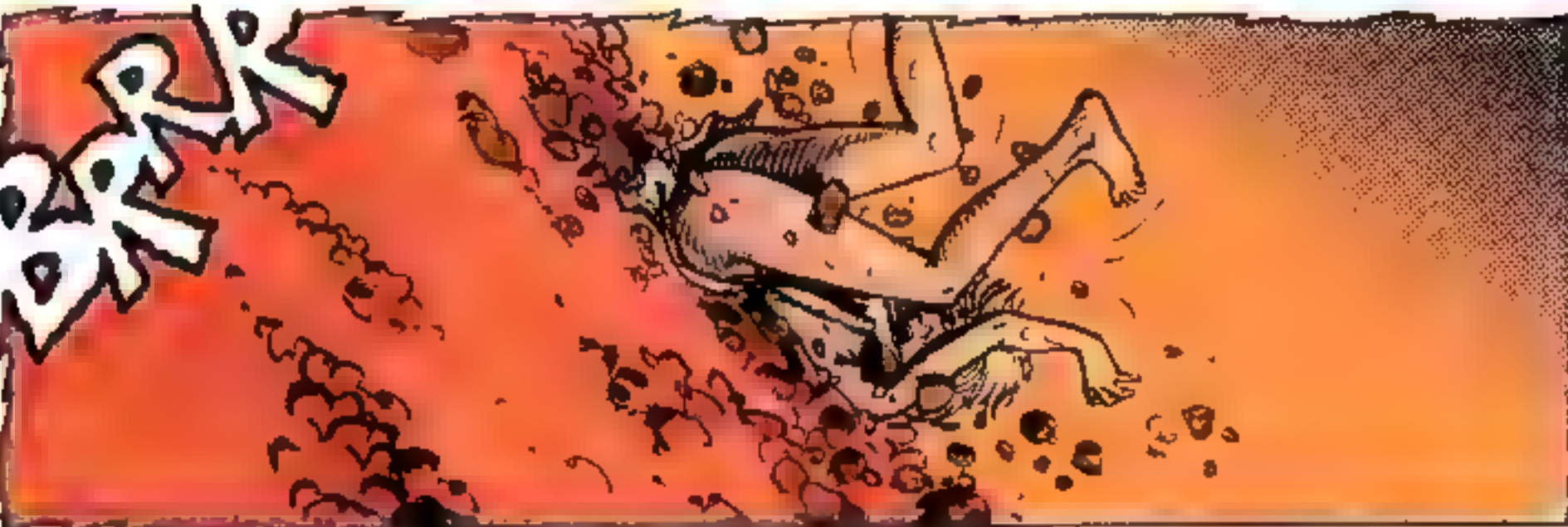
BBRRRRR



BBRRRRR



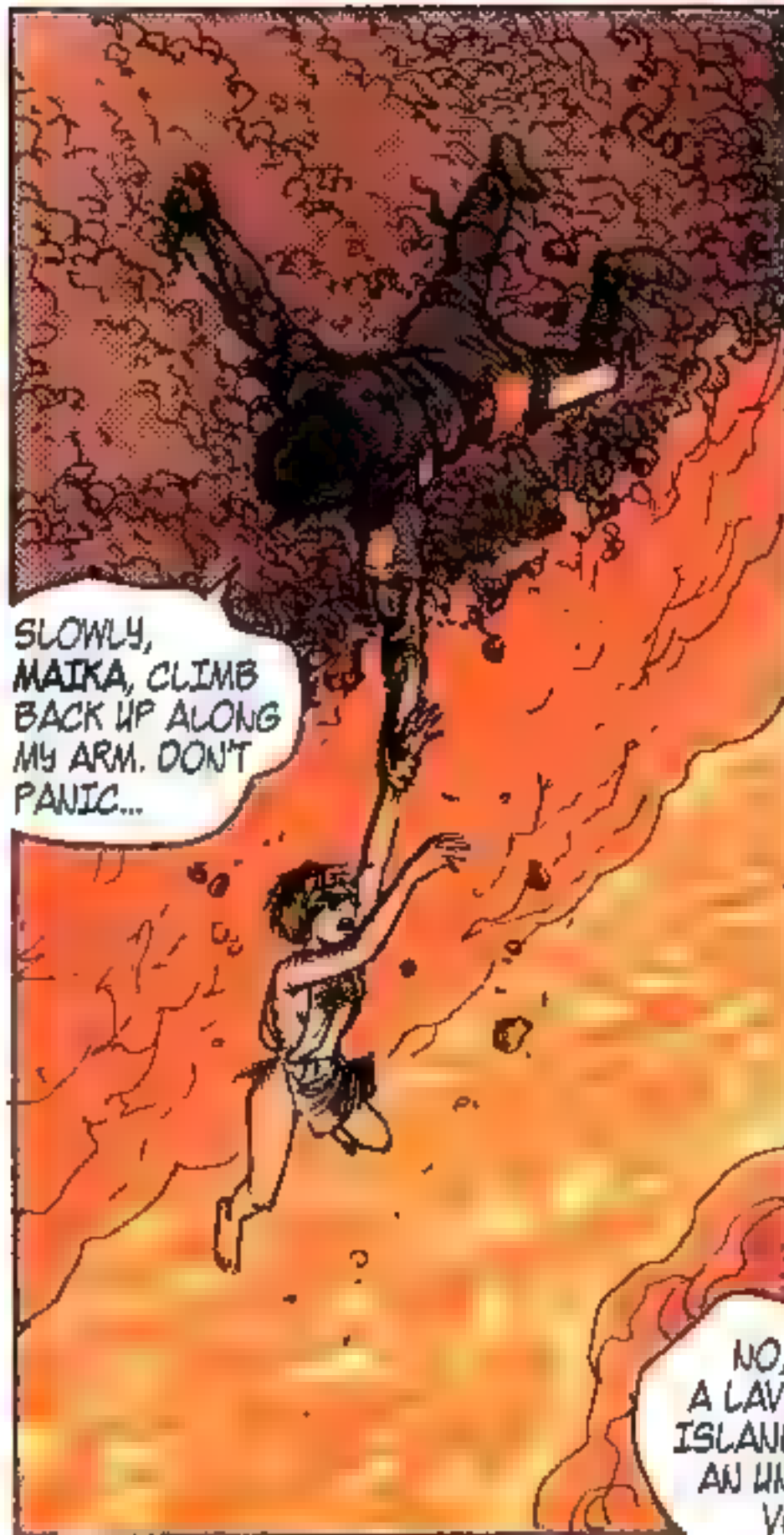
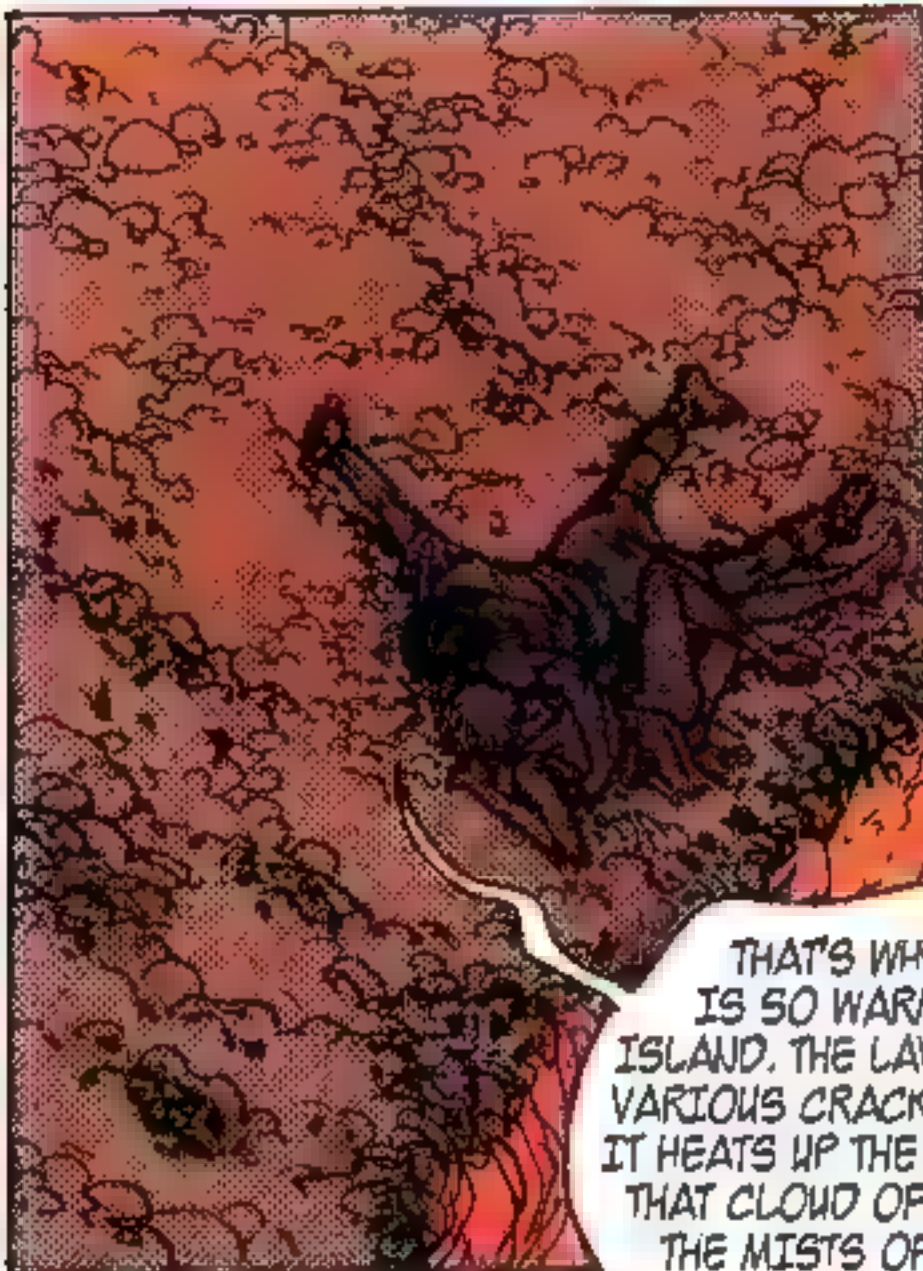
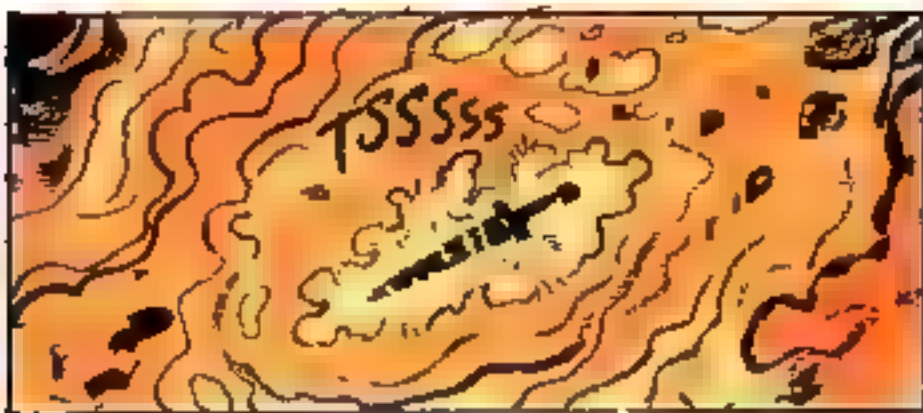
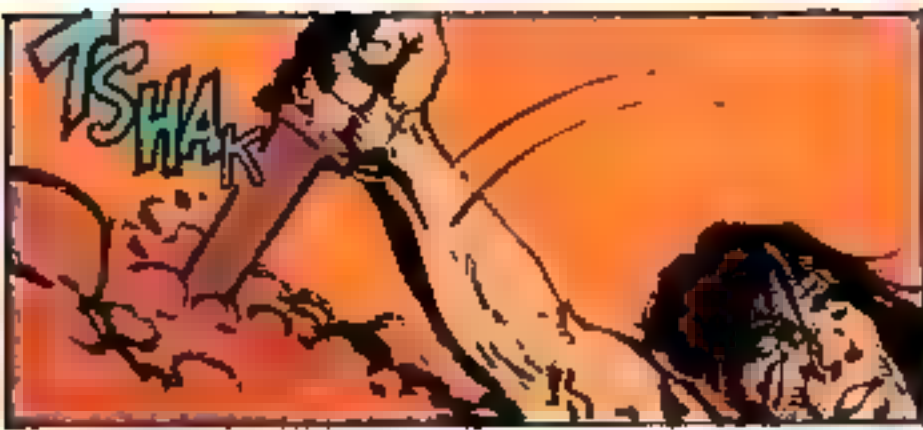
BBBRRRRR



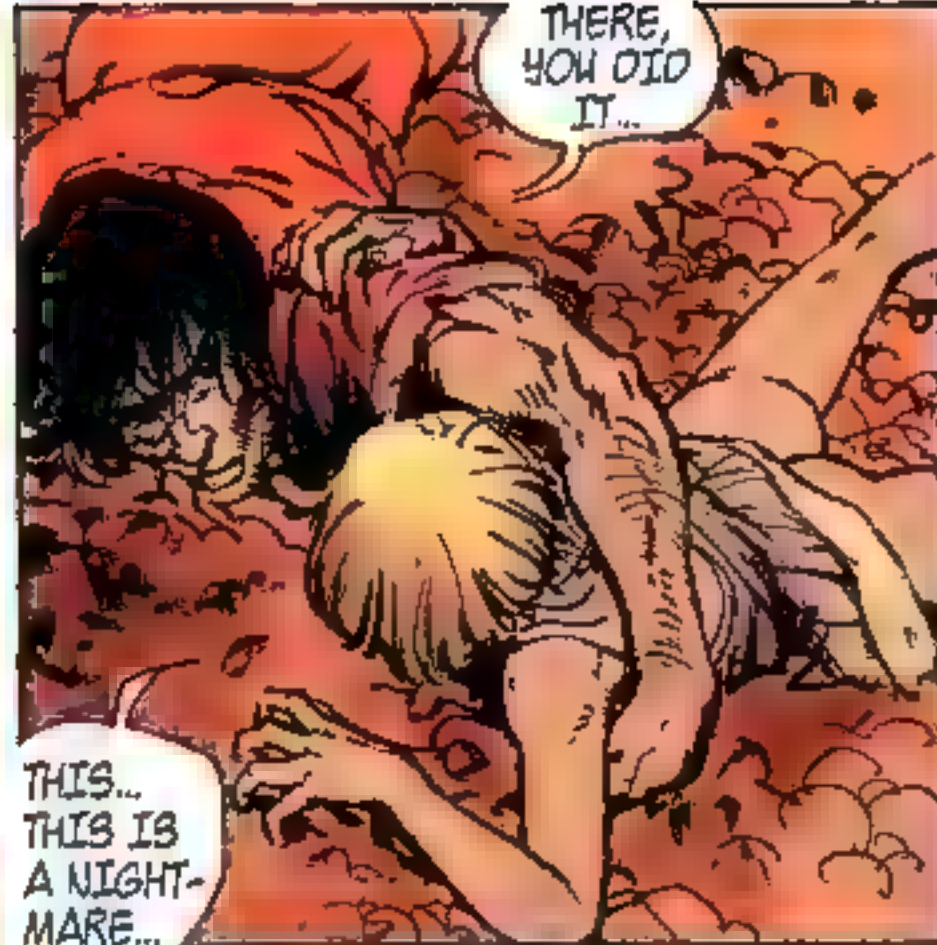
BBRRRR



AAHHH

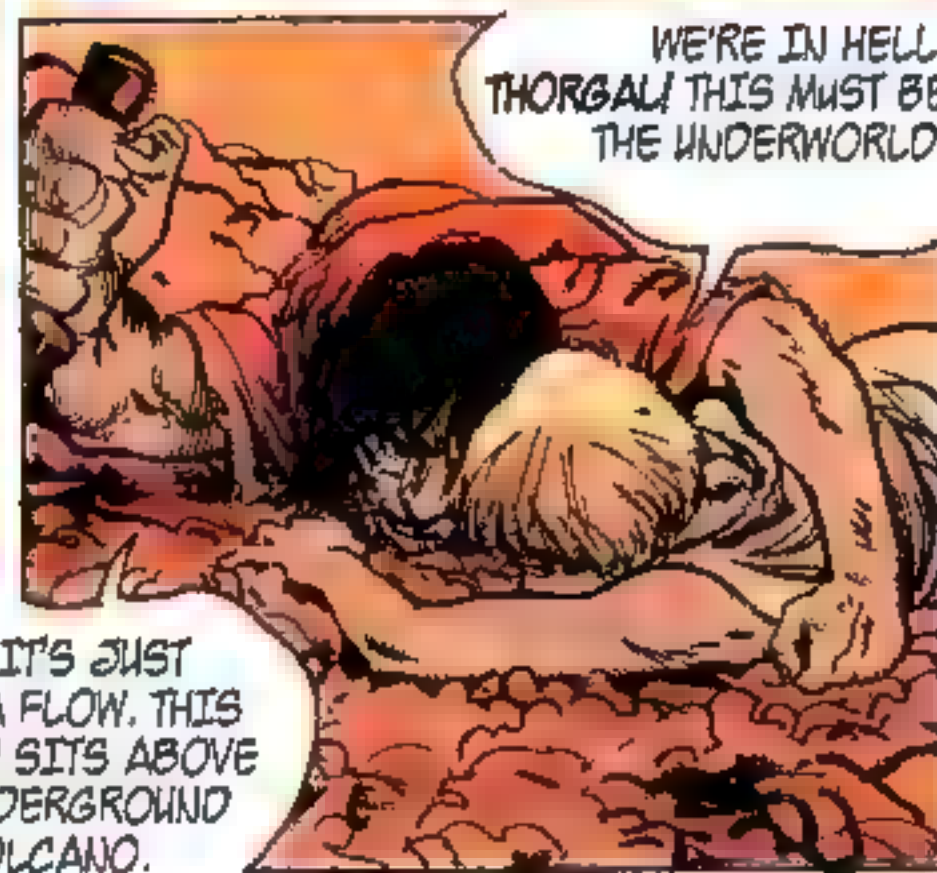


SLOWLY,
MAIKA, CLIMB
BACK UP ALONG
MY ARM. DON'T
PANIC...



THERE,
YOU DID
IT...

THIS...
THIS IS
A NIGHT-
MARE...



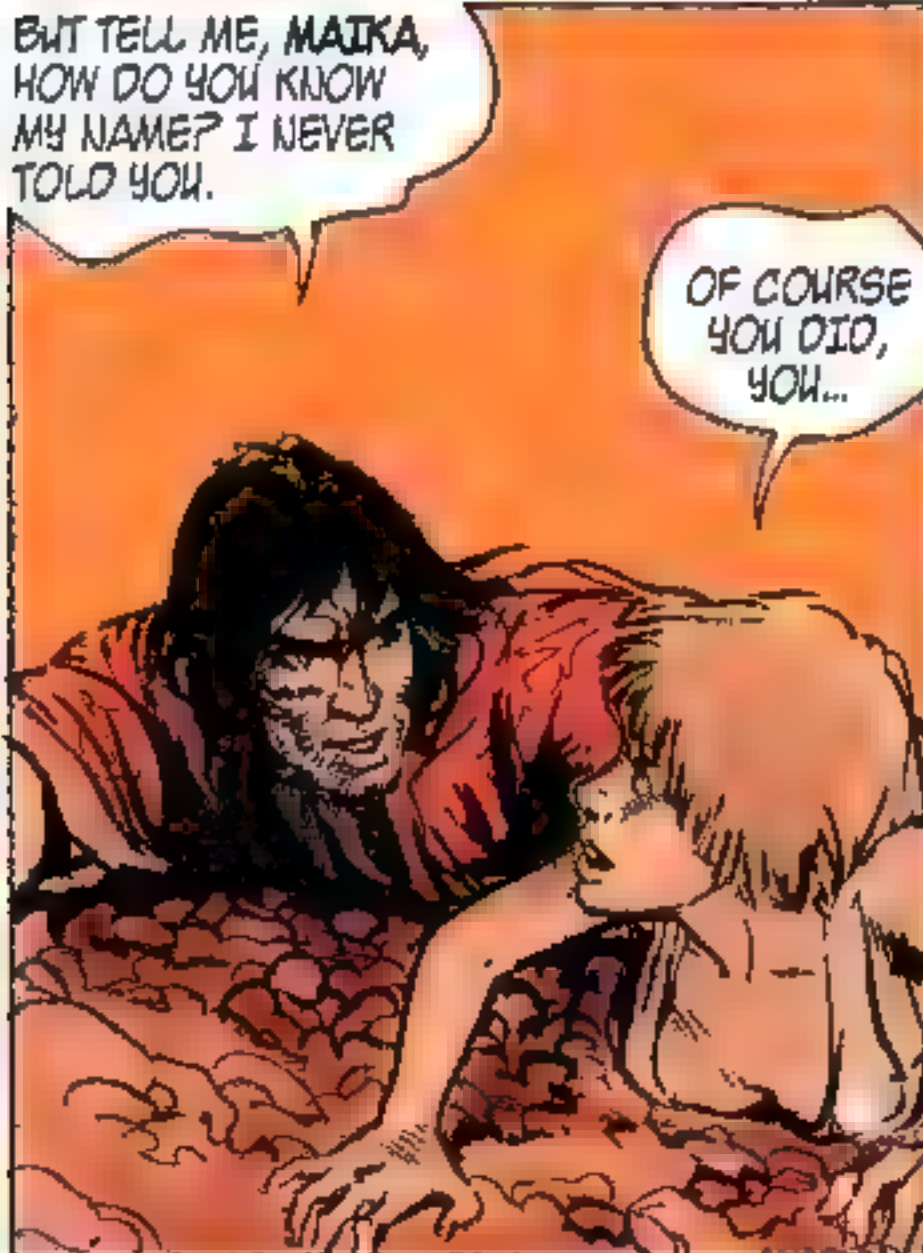
WE'RE IN HELL,
THORGAL! THIS MUST BE
THE UNDERWORLD!

NO, IT'S JUST
A LAVA FLOW. THIS
ISLAND SITS ABOVE
AN UNDERGROUND
VOLCANO.

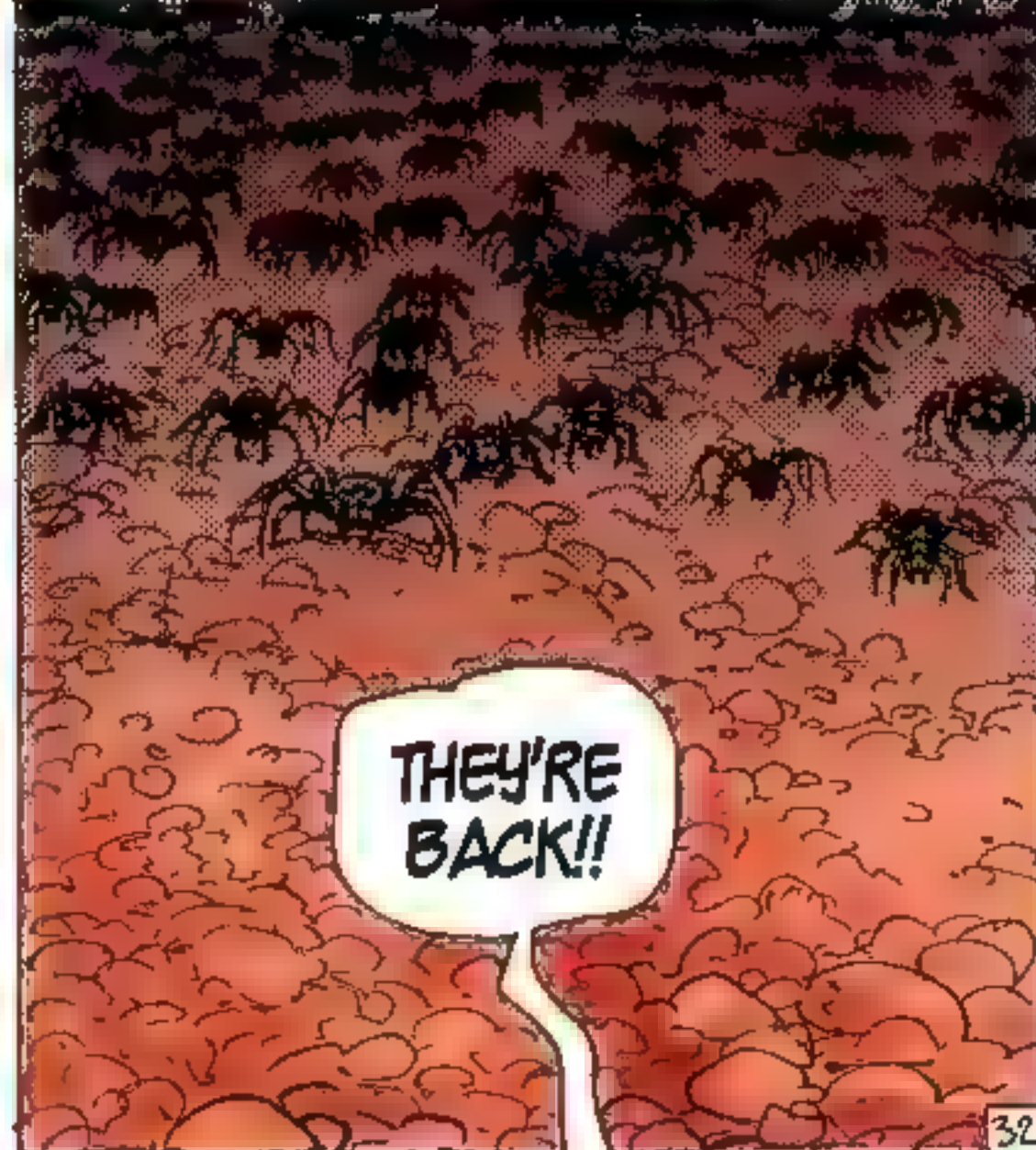
THAT'S WHY THE WATER
IS SO WARM AROUND THE
ISLAND. THE LAVA SEEPS THROUGH
VARIOUS CRACKS IN THE GROUND.
IT HEATS UP THE SEA AND CREATES
THAT CLOUD OF STEAM YOU CALL
THE MISTS OF NOTHINGNESS.

BUT TELL ME, MAIKA,
HOW DO YOU KNOW
MY NAME? I NEVER
TOLD YOU.

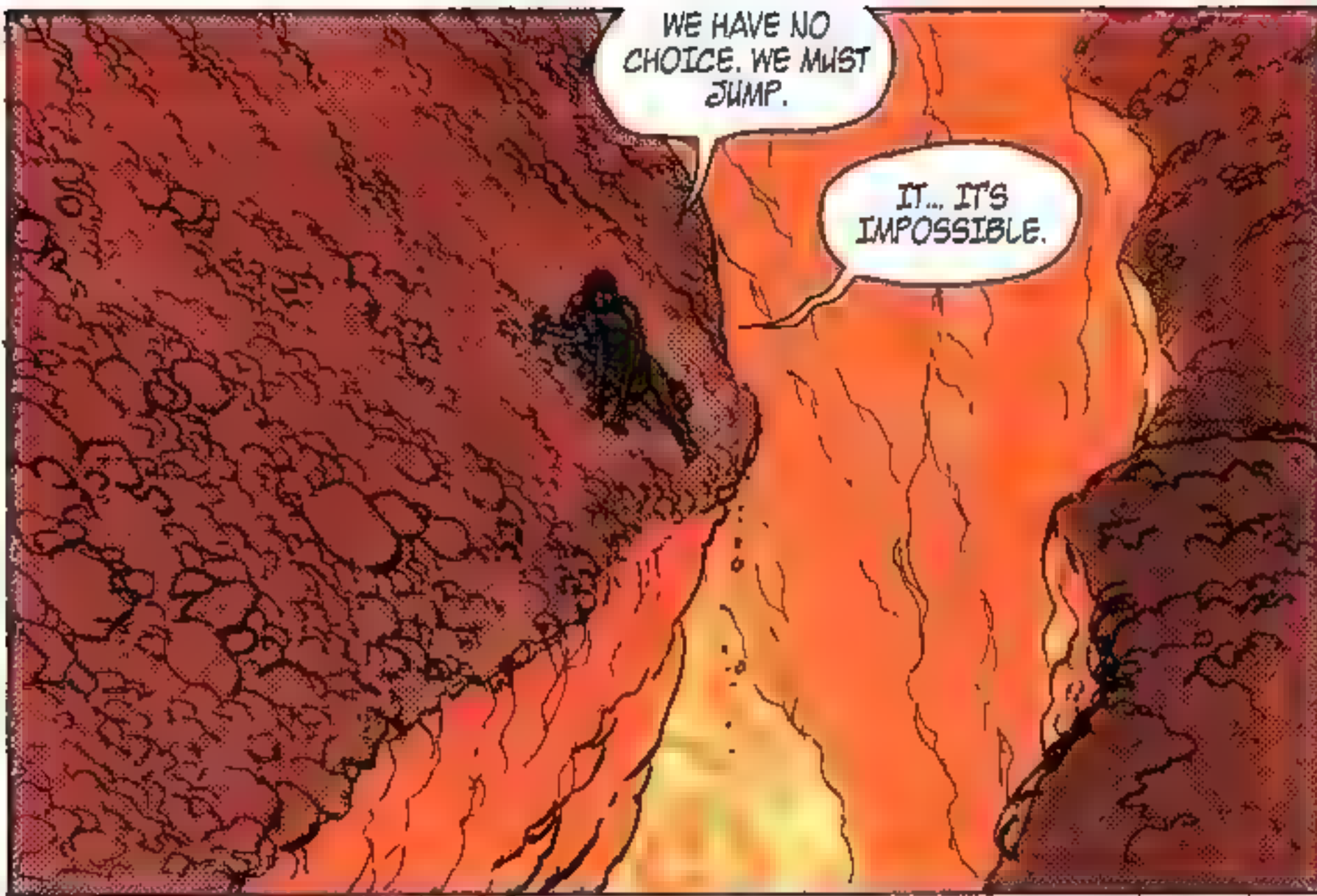
OF COURSE
YOU DID,
YOU...



OH!...



THEY'RE
BACK!!

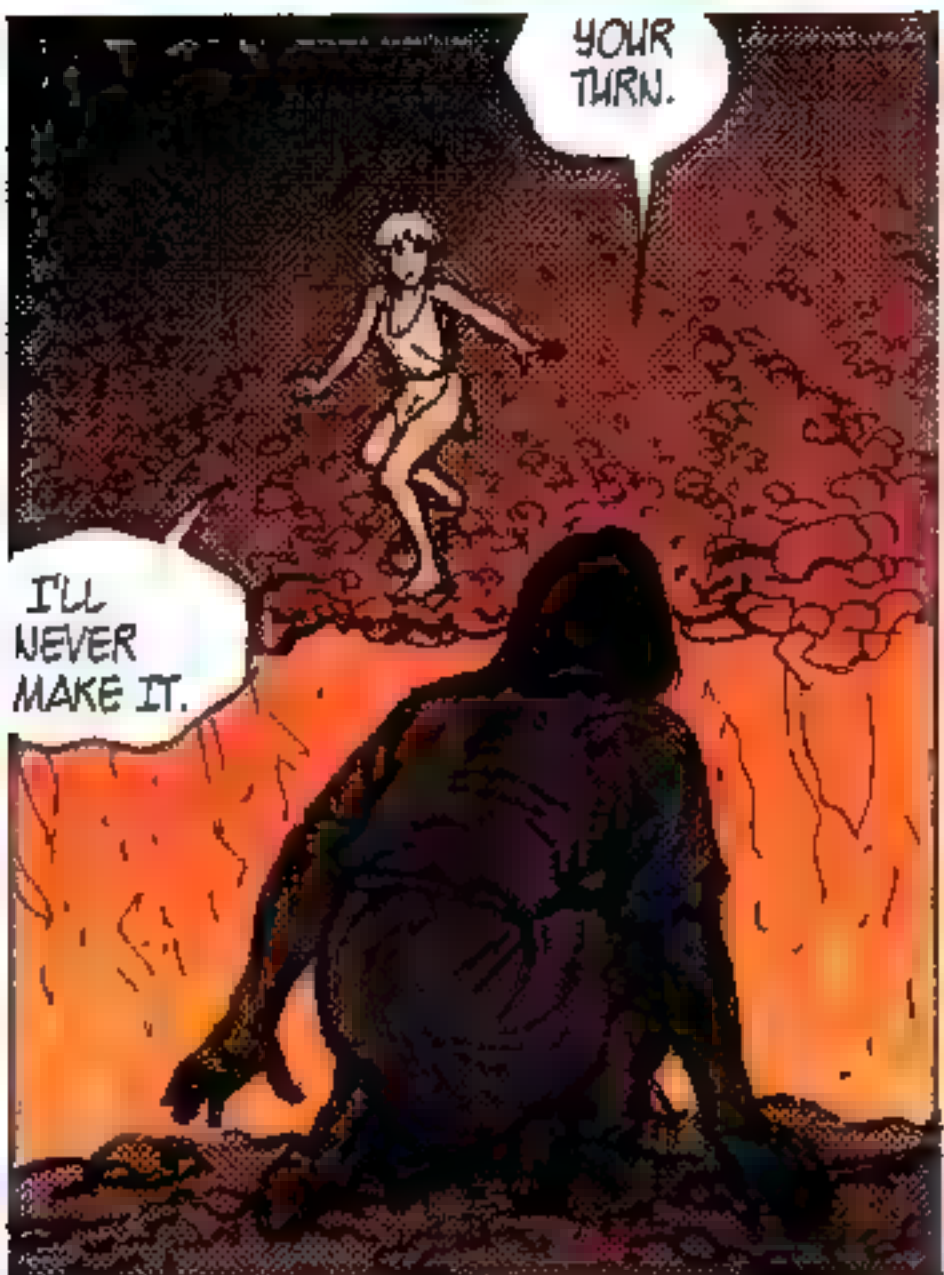


WE HAVE NO CHOICE. WE MUST JUMP.

IT... IT'S IMPOSSIBLE.

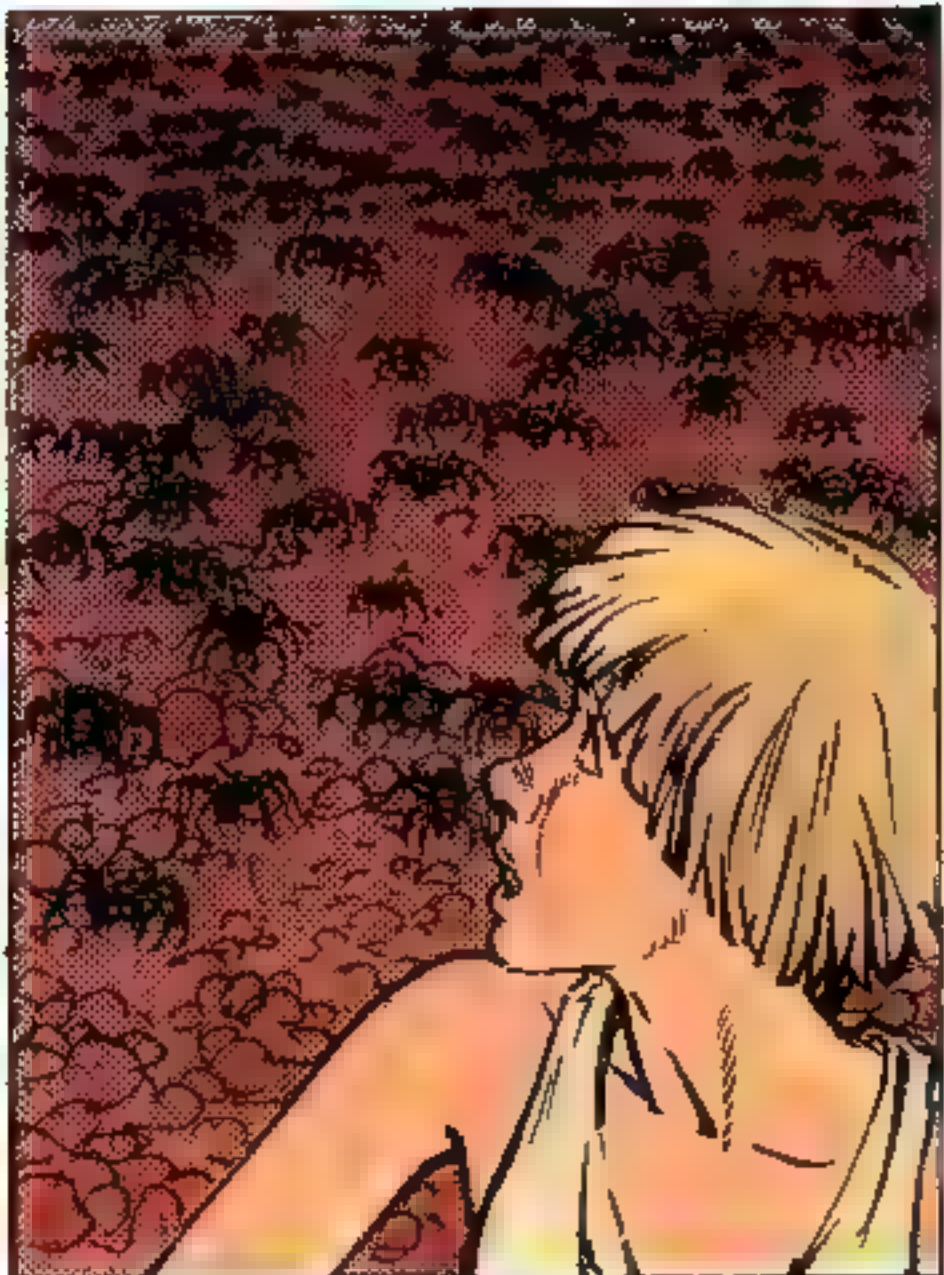


OF COURSE IT'S POSSIBLE.

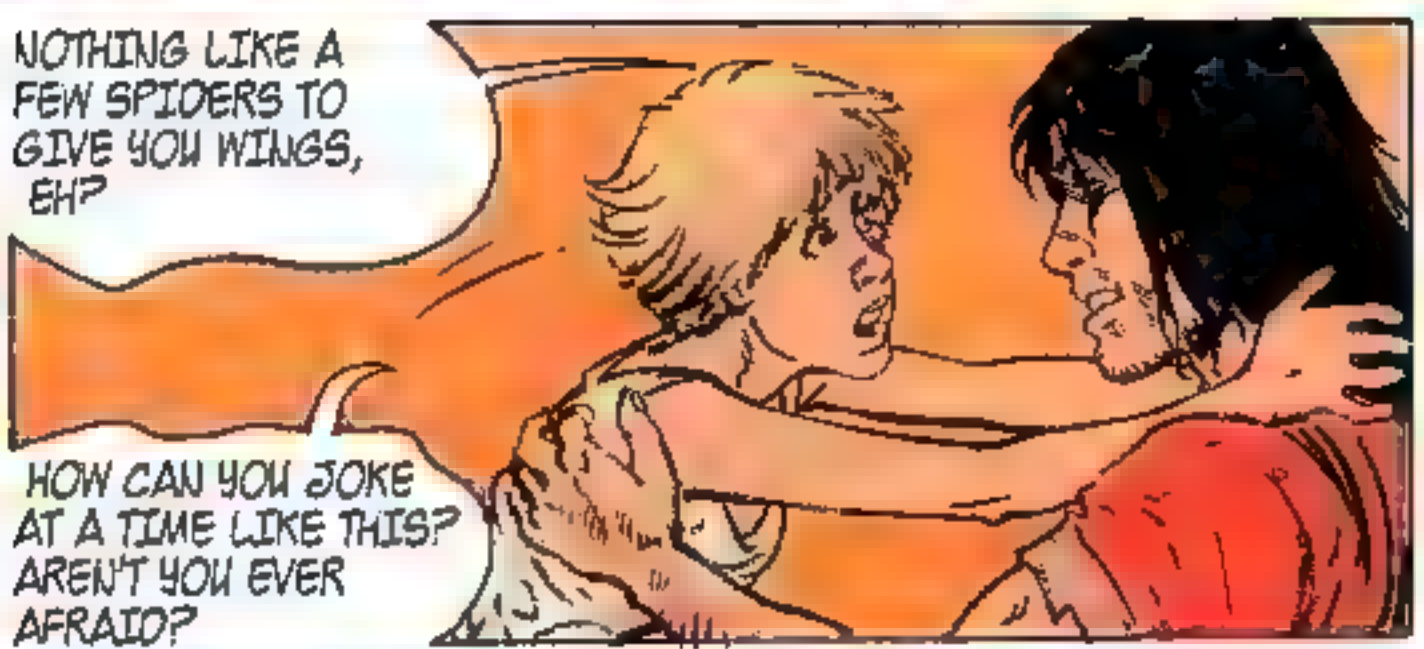


YOUR TURN.

I'LL NEVER MAKE IT.



AAAAHH



NOTHING LIKE A FEW SPIDERS TO GIVE YOU WINGS, EHP?

HOW CAN YOU JOKE AT A TIME LIKE THIS? AREN'T YOU EVER AFRAID?



WHERE CAN WE GO NOW? THIS IS A DEAD END.

THERE, THERE'S A TUNNEL.

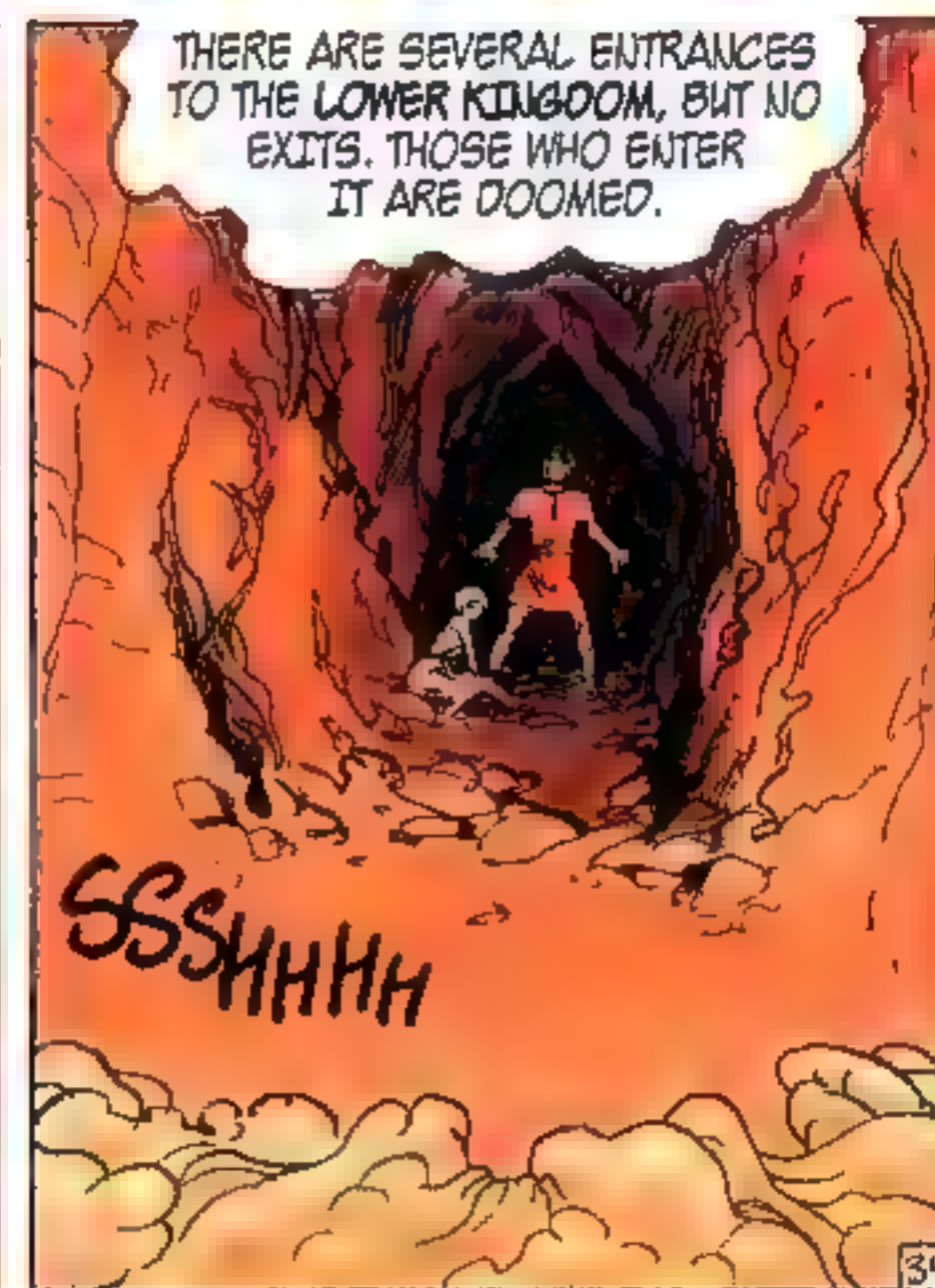
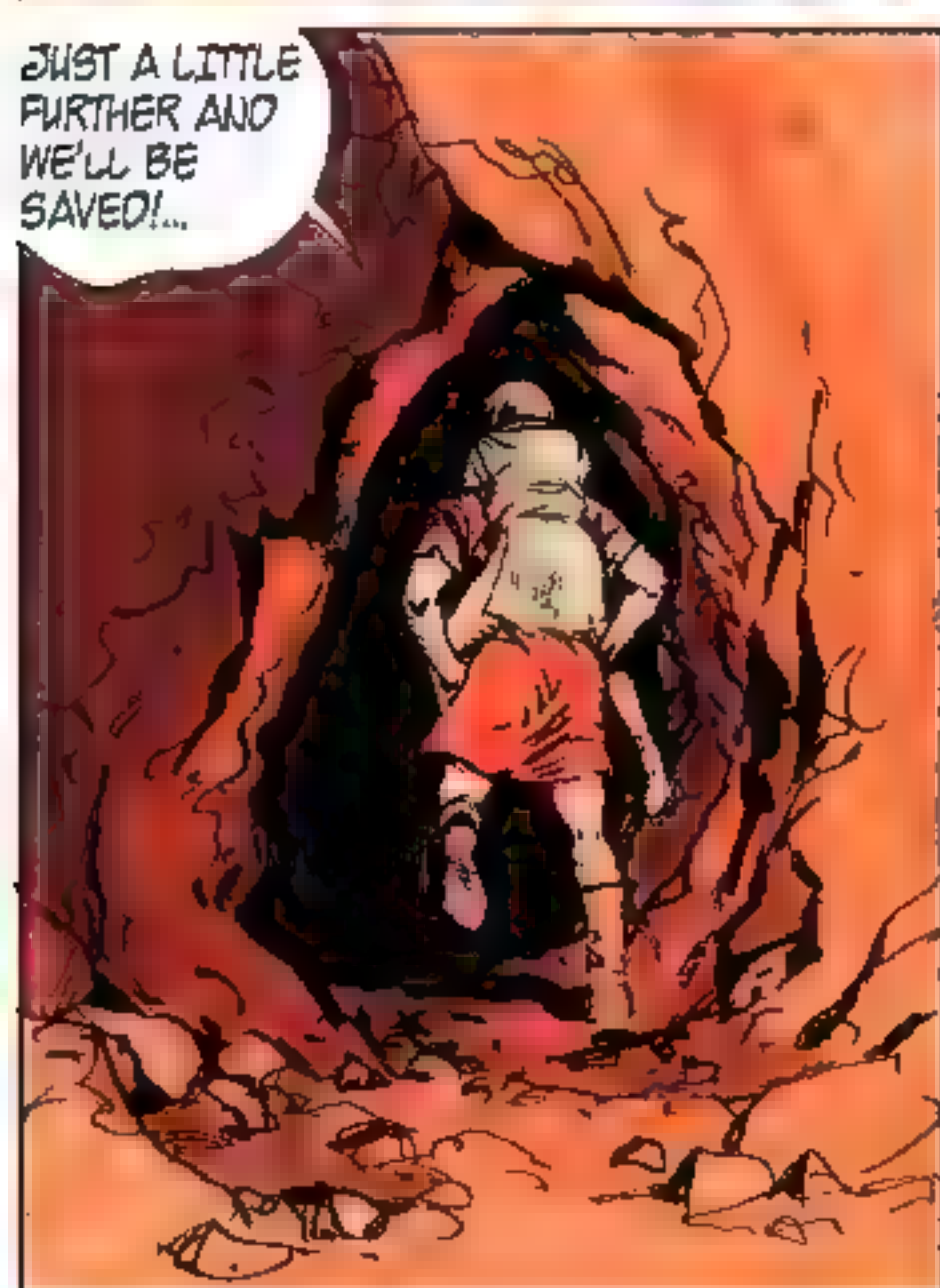
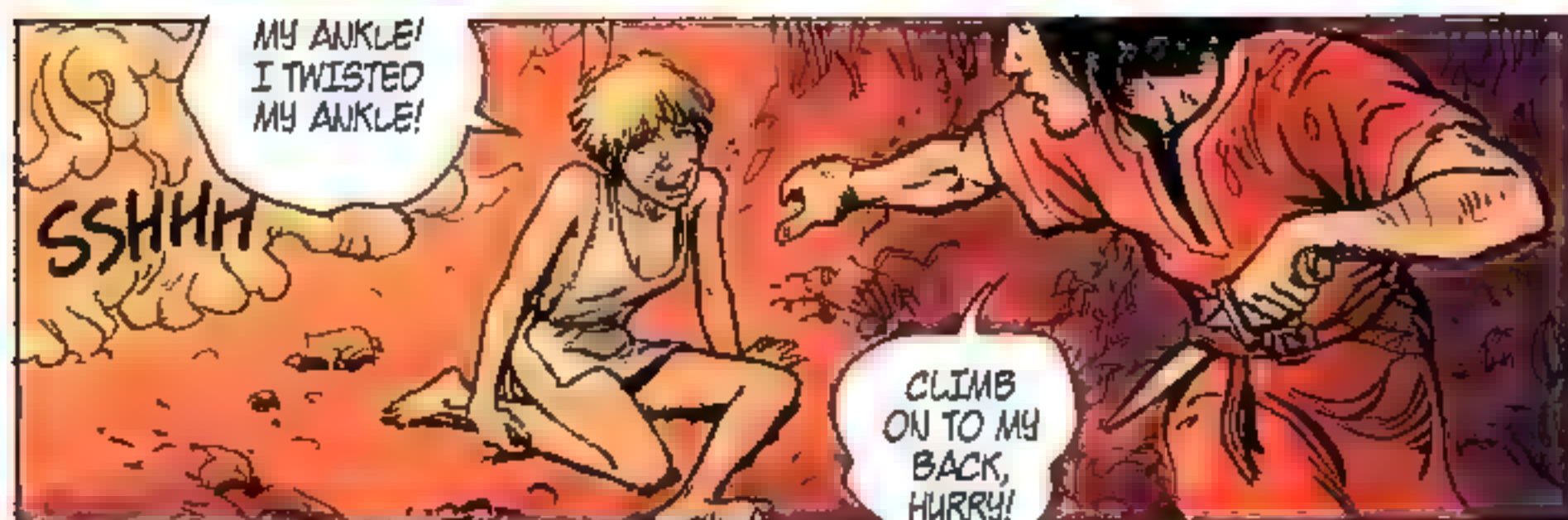


OH, YES, I AM, CHILD. JUST LIKE YOU. BUT WE HAVE TO STRIVE TO MASTER THAT FEAR IF WE WANT TO SURVIVE.

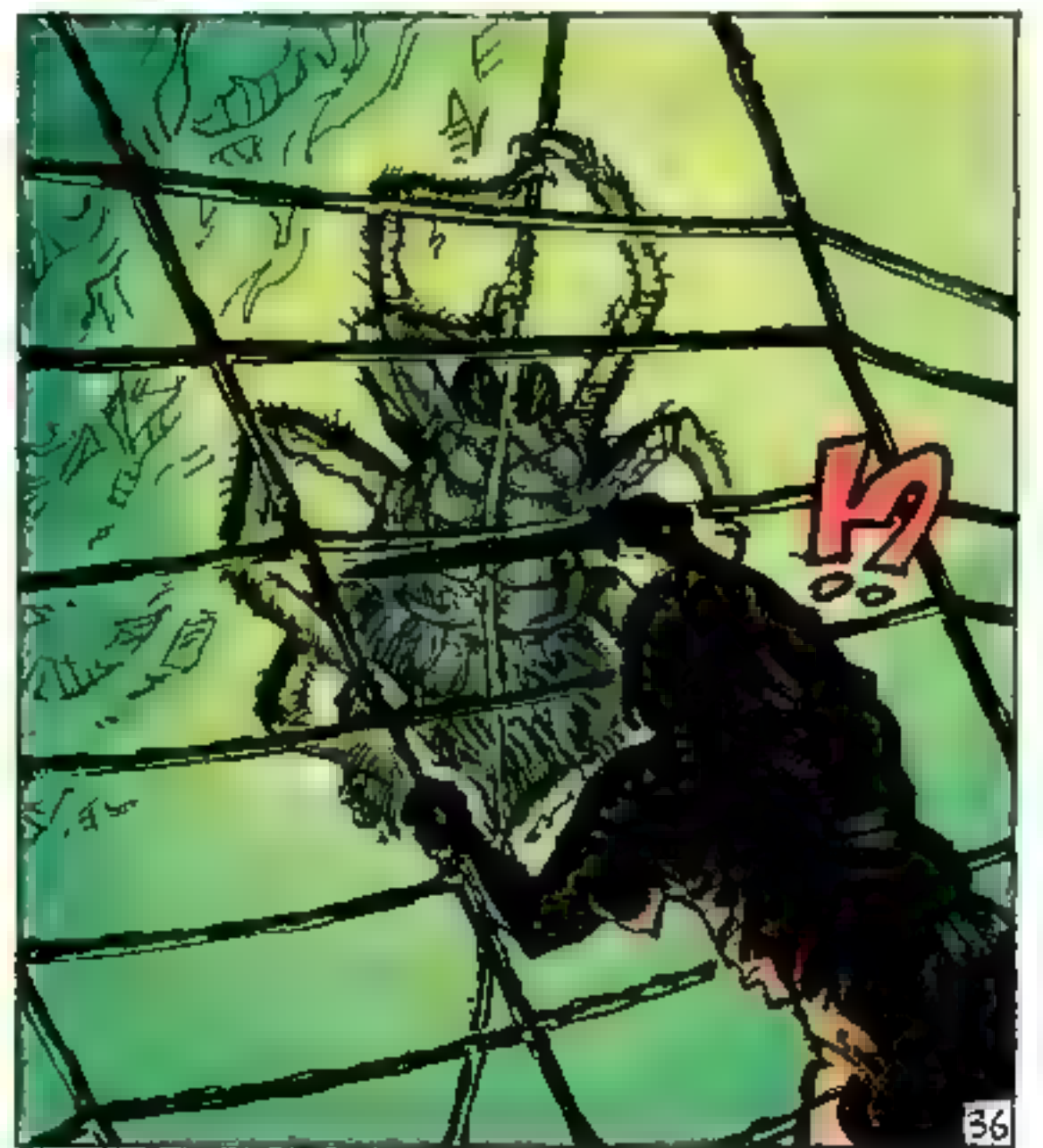
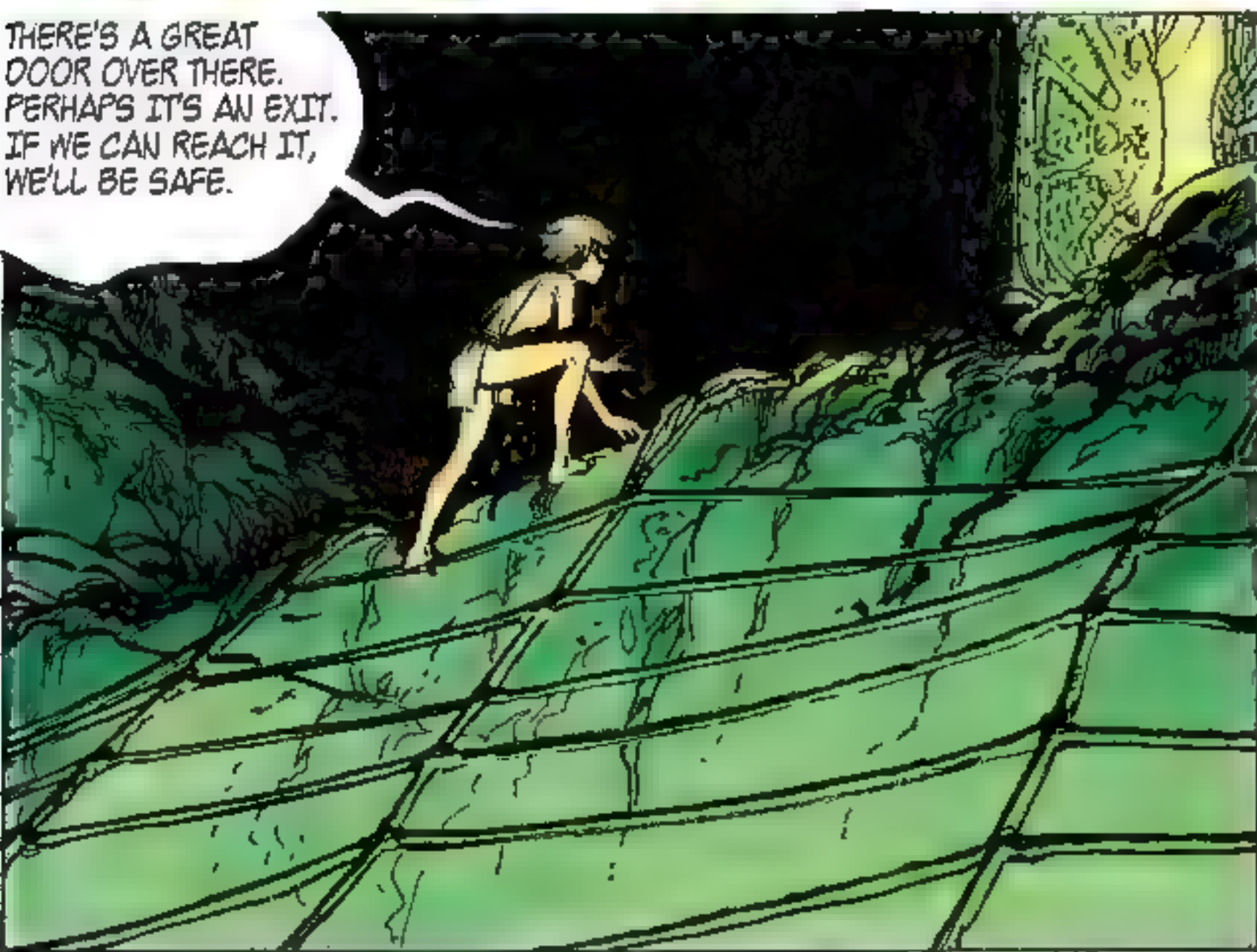


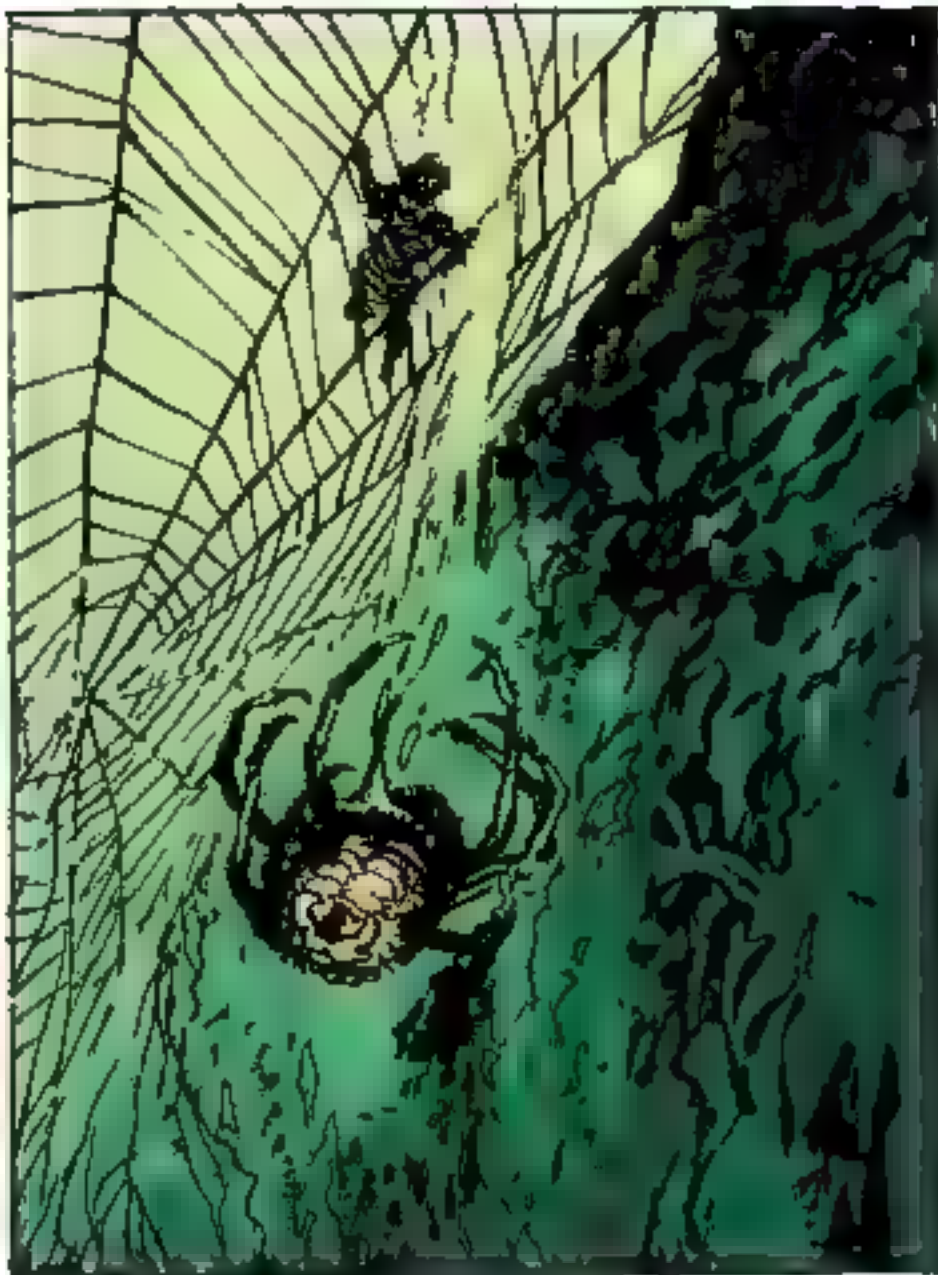
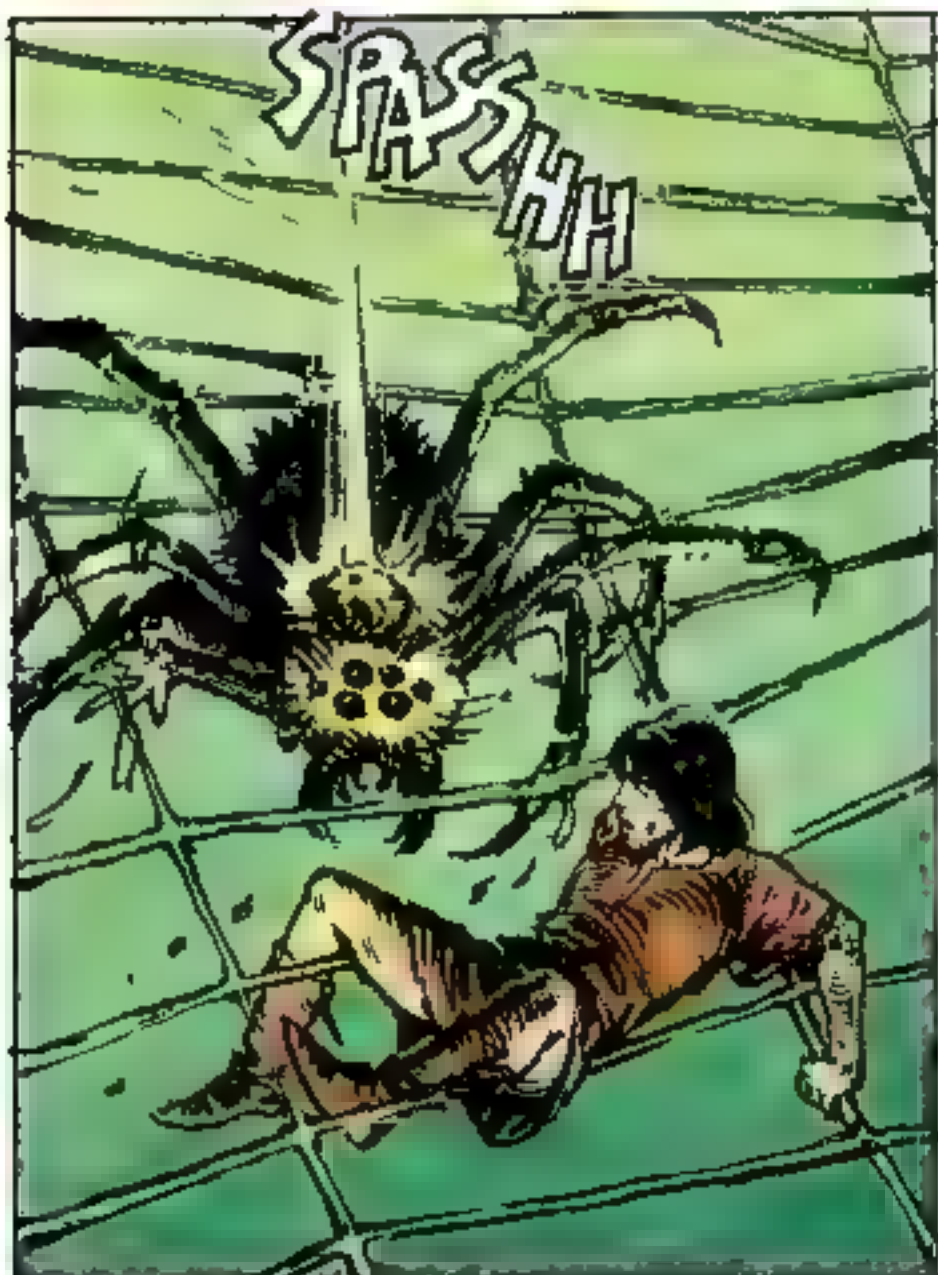
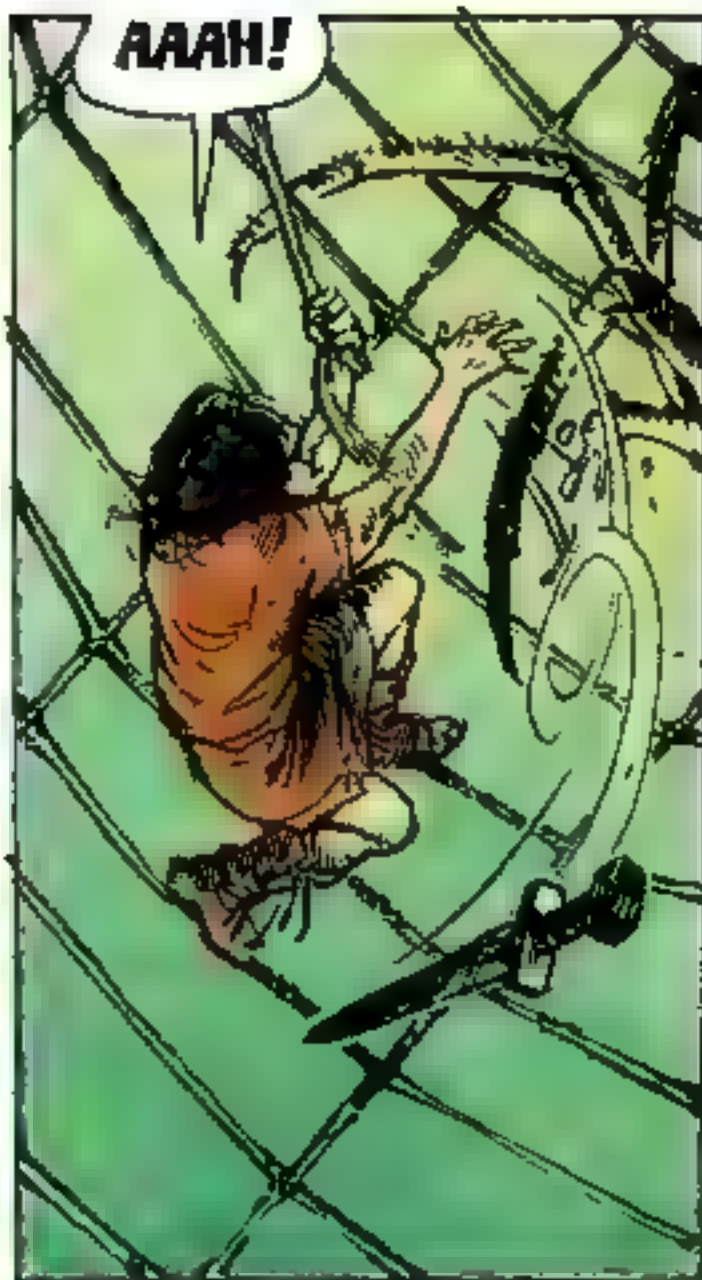
DO YOU THINK WE SHOULD?

IF YOU HAVE ANOTHER SOLUTION, LET ME KNOW.

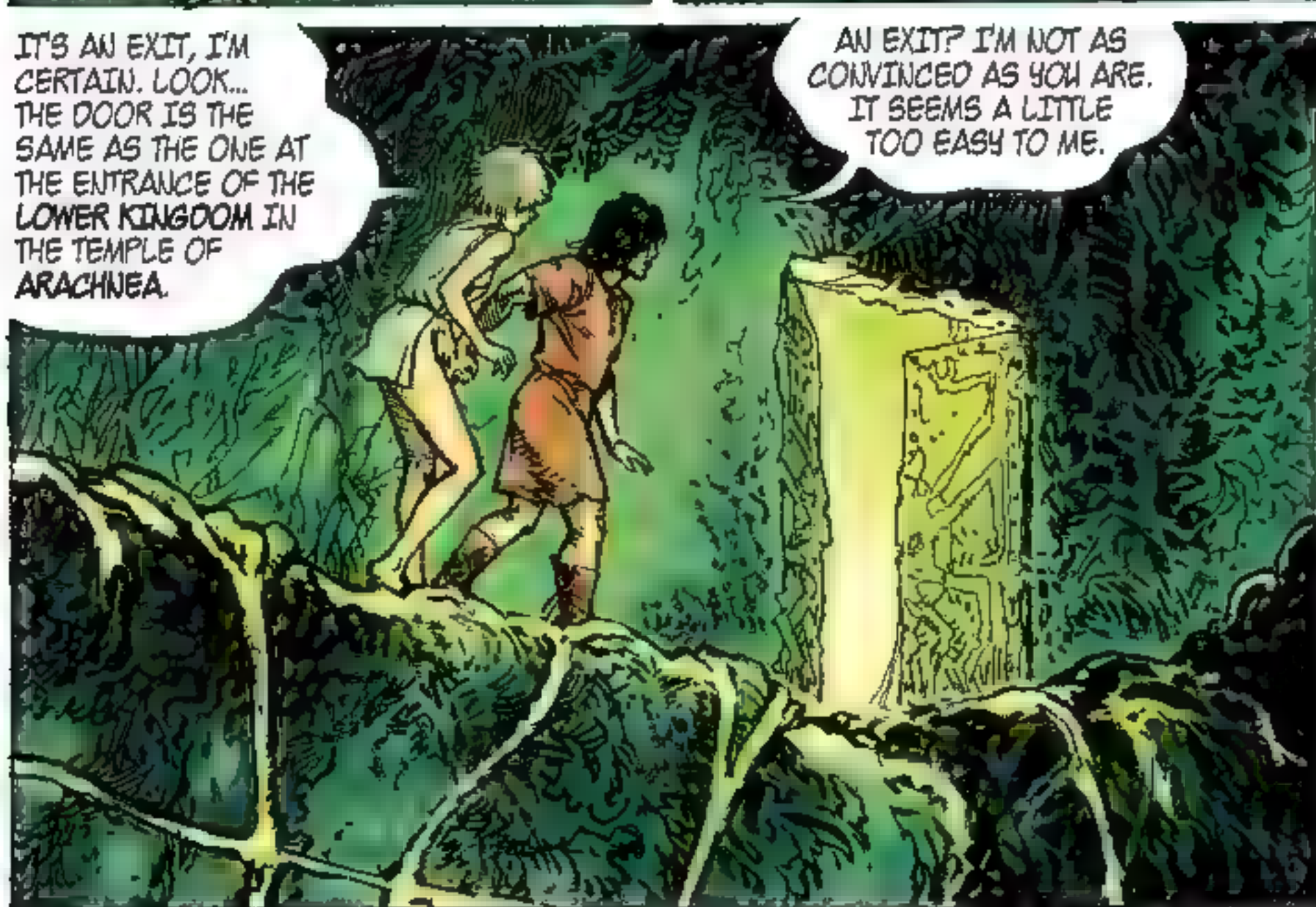






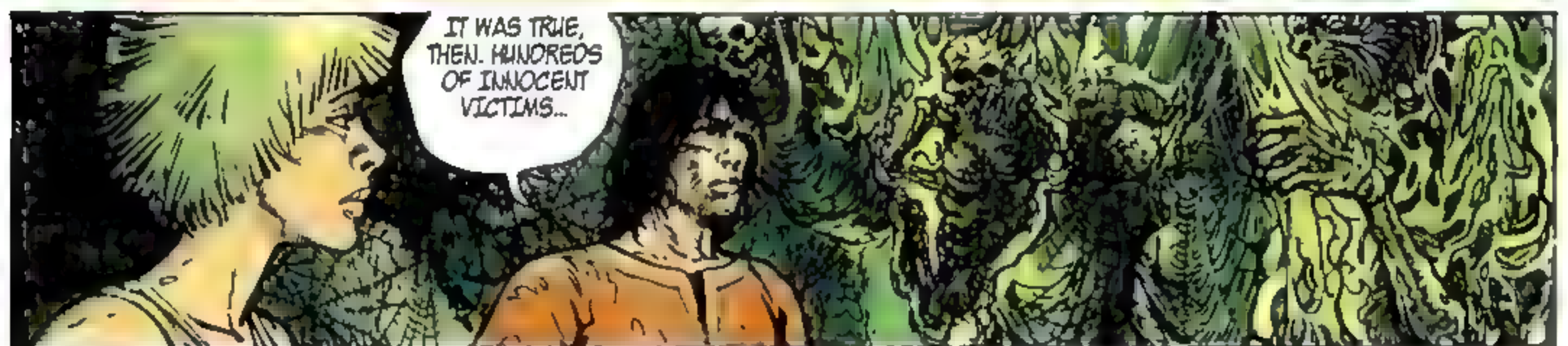


IT'S AN EXIT, I'M CERTAIN. LOOK... THE DOOR IS THE SAME AS THE ONE AT THE ENTRANCE OF THE LOWER KINGDOM IN THE TEMPLE OF ARACHNEA.





ARACHNEA'S
NECROPOLIS!!!



IT WAS TRUE,
THEN. HUNDREDS
OF INNOCENT
VICTIMS...



...SACRIFICED
TO THE APPETITE
OF A MONSTER
FOR A THOUSAND
YEARS



FROM
THE OLDEST
ONES...



...TO
THE MOST
RECENT



?!?

MAIKA, WHAT DOES...?!

WHAT DOES IT MEAN? THAT I PLAYED MY ROLE WELL. YOU WERE RIGHT, THORGAL. WE DO OBEY AN ORDER.



AND THAT ORDER WAS TO BRING YOU WHERE YOU WERE NEEDED IN SPITE OF YOURSELF..



...TO THE HEART OF ARACHNEA'S LOWER KINGDOM!!



WHERE DO YOU HOPE TO GO, PROUD THORGAL? THERE IS NO EXIT.



YOU ARE STRONG AND BRAVE. PROBABLY THE MOST VALIANT MAN EVER TO ENTER OUR UNDERGROUND WORLD. BUT YOU'VE REACHED THE END OF YOUR PATH.



TONIGHT, YOU SHALL BE ARACHNEA'S HUSBAND, THORGAL. LIKE ALL THOSE WHO CAME BEFORE. AND LIKE ALL THOSE WHO CAME BEFORE, ONCE YOU'VE MATED WITH HER...



... WE, HER DAUGHTERS, **WILL DEVOUR YOU !!!**

NO, NOT HIM. NOT YET...

FREE HIM! HE MAY BE THE ONE ARACHNEA HAS BEEN AWAITING ALL THESE CENTURIES.



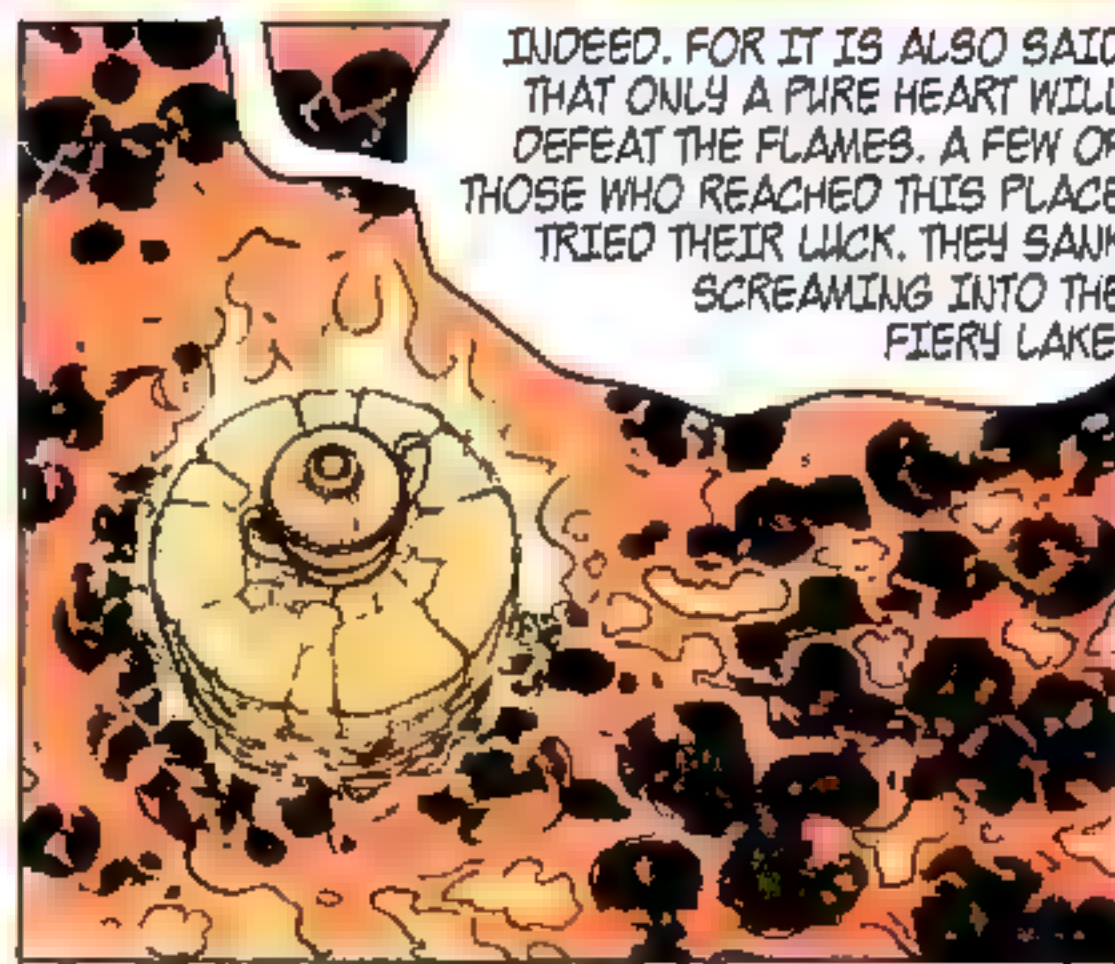


THE SPIRIT OF ELIOCLE, BELOVED OF SHE WHO WAS ONCE SERENA, HAS BEEN TRAPPED FOR A THOUSAND YEARS IN THIS FLAME-WREATHED URN - UNABLE TO MAKE HIS WAY TO THE LAND OF THE DEAD AND FIND REST AT LAST.

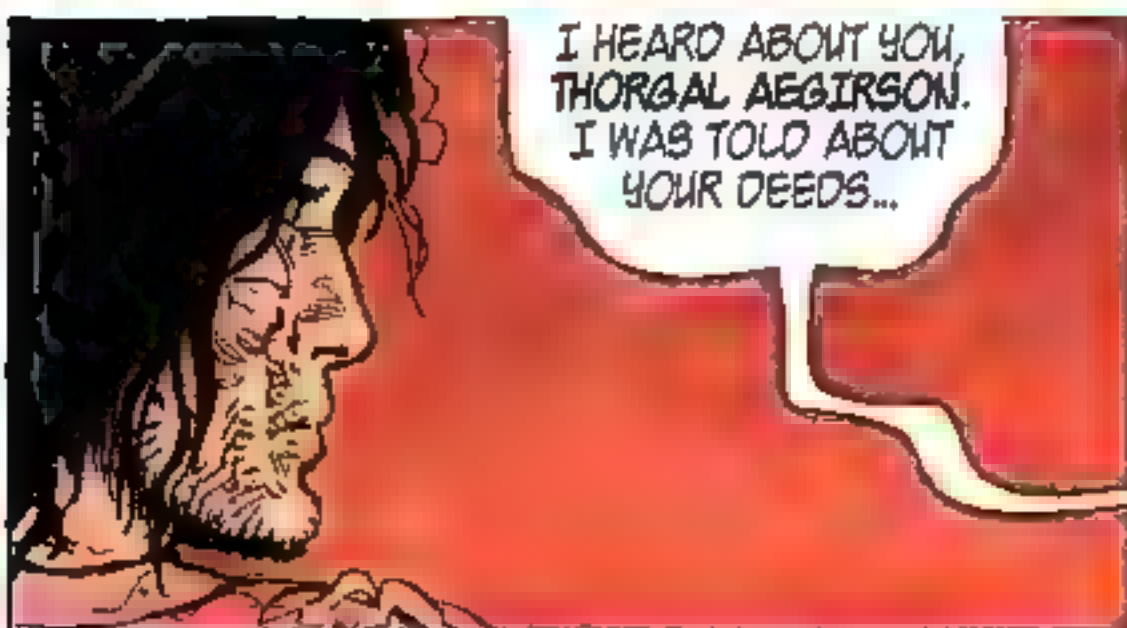
IT IS SAID THAT WHOEVER FREES HIM WILL ALSO FREE OUR LAND FROM THE CURSE IT'S BEEN UNDER SINCE DRAGON COMMITTED HIS CRIME TEN CENTURIES AGO.



IT LOOKS RATHER DIFFICULT TO ACHIEVE.

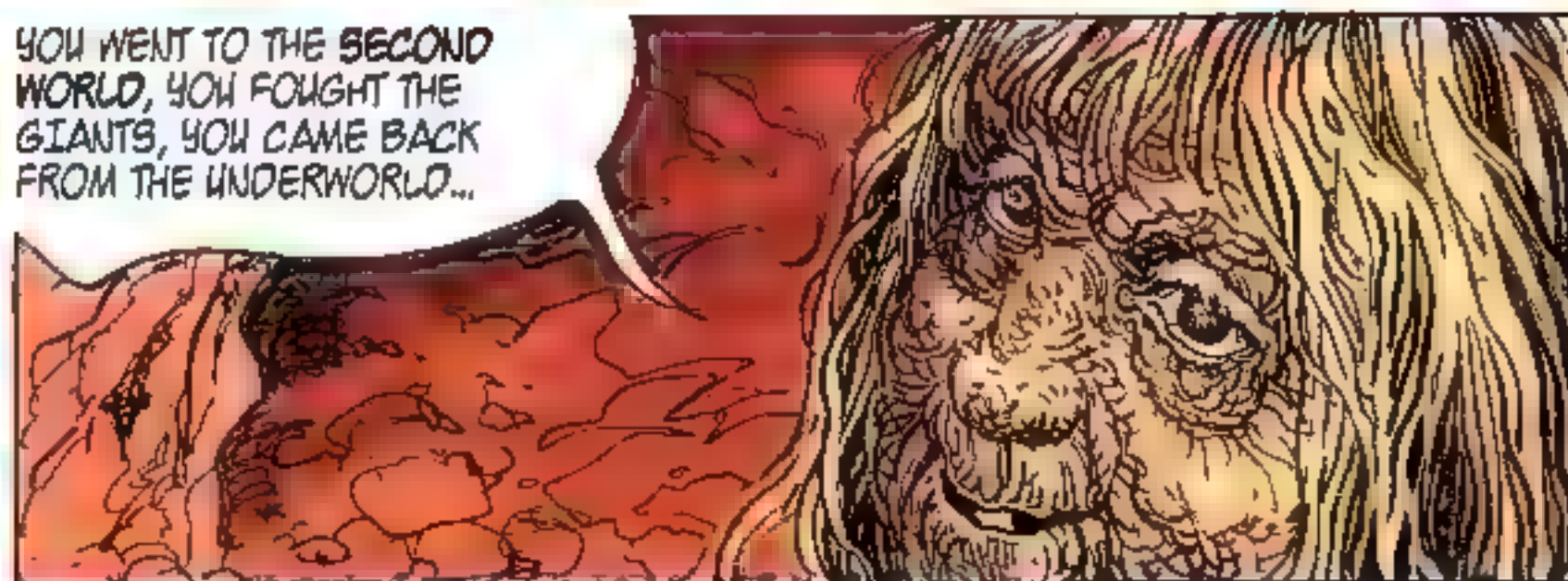


INDEED. FOR IT IS ALSO SAID THAT ONLY A PURE HEART WILL DEFEAT THE FLAMES. A FEW OF THOSE WHO REACHED THIS PLACE TRIED THEIR LUCK. THEY SANK SCREAMING INTO THE FIERY LAKE.



I HEARD ABOUT YOU, THORGAL AEGIRSON. I WAS TOLD ABOUT YOUR DEEDS...

YOU WENT TO THE SECOND WORLD, YOU FOUGHT THE GIANTS, YOU CAME BACK FROM THE UNDERWORLD...

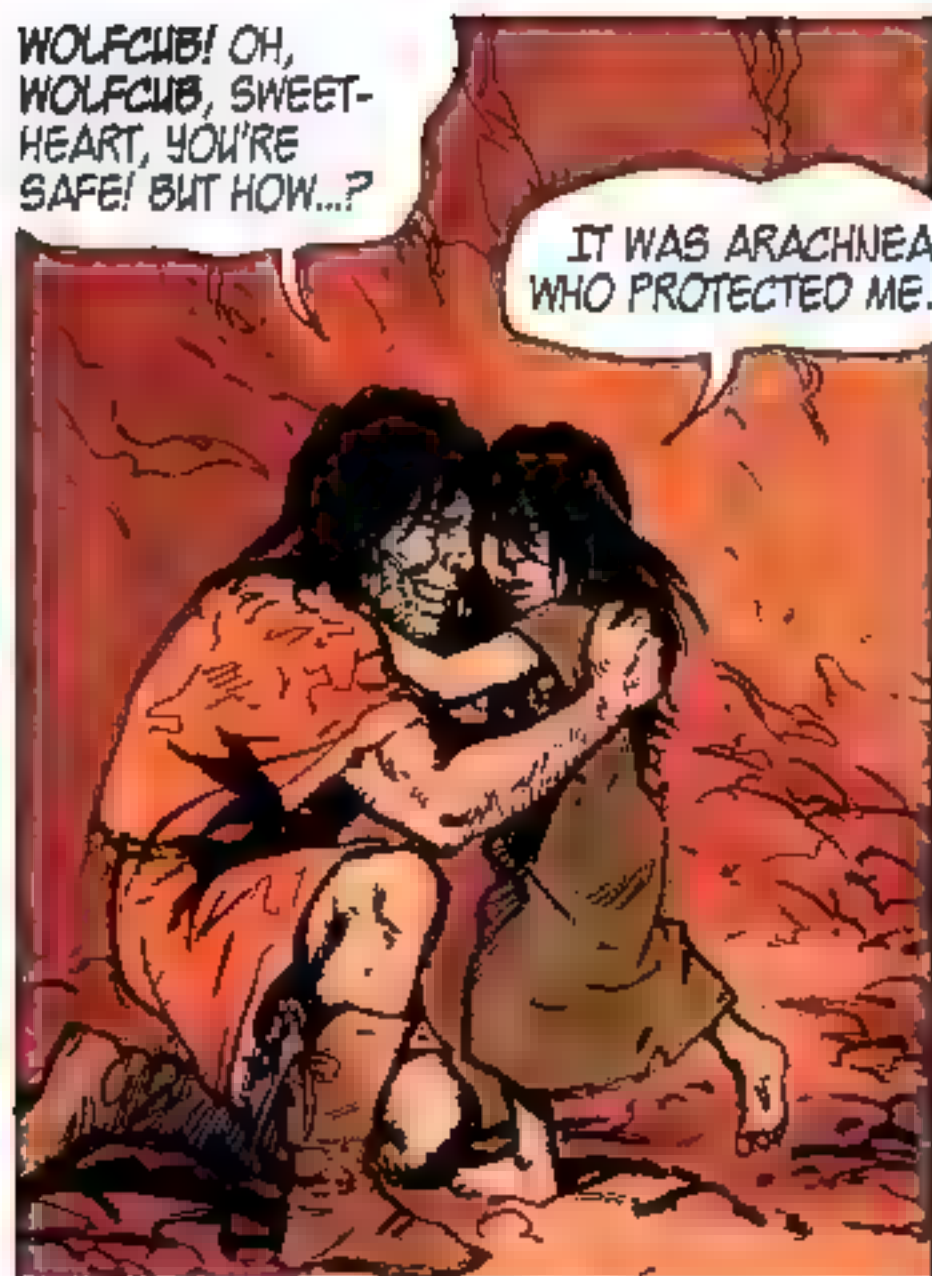


YOU MAY BE ABLE TO BRING ABOUT THE MIRACLE THAT WILL SAVE US ALL.

YOU'RE WRONG, OLD WOMAN. I MADE TOO MANY MISTAKES, AND I'M GUILTY OF TOO MANY CRIMES. I'M NOT THE ONE YOU WERE EXPECTING.

WHAT ABOUT ME?...





WOLFCUB! OH, WOLFCUB, SWEET-HEART, YOU'RE SAFE! BUT HOW...?

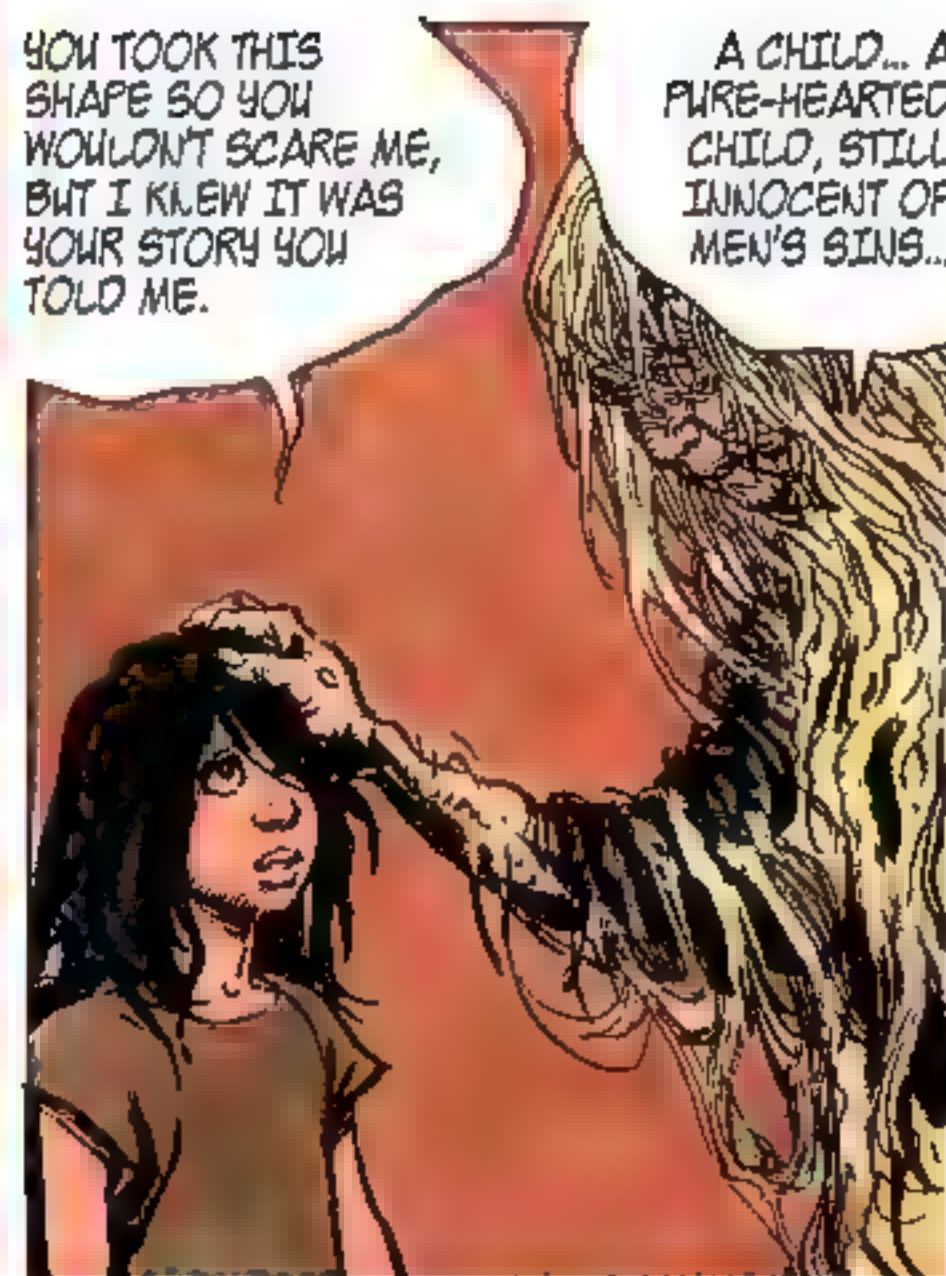
IT WAS ARACHNEA WHO PROTECTED ME.



ARACHNEA?...

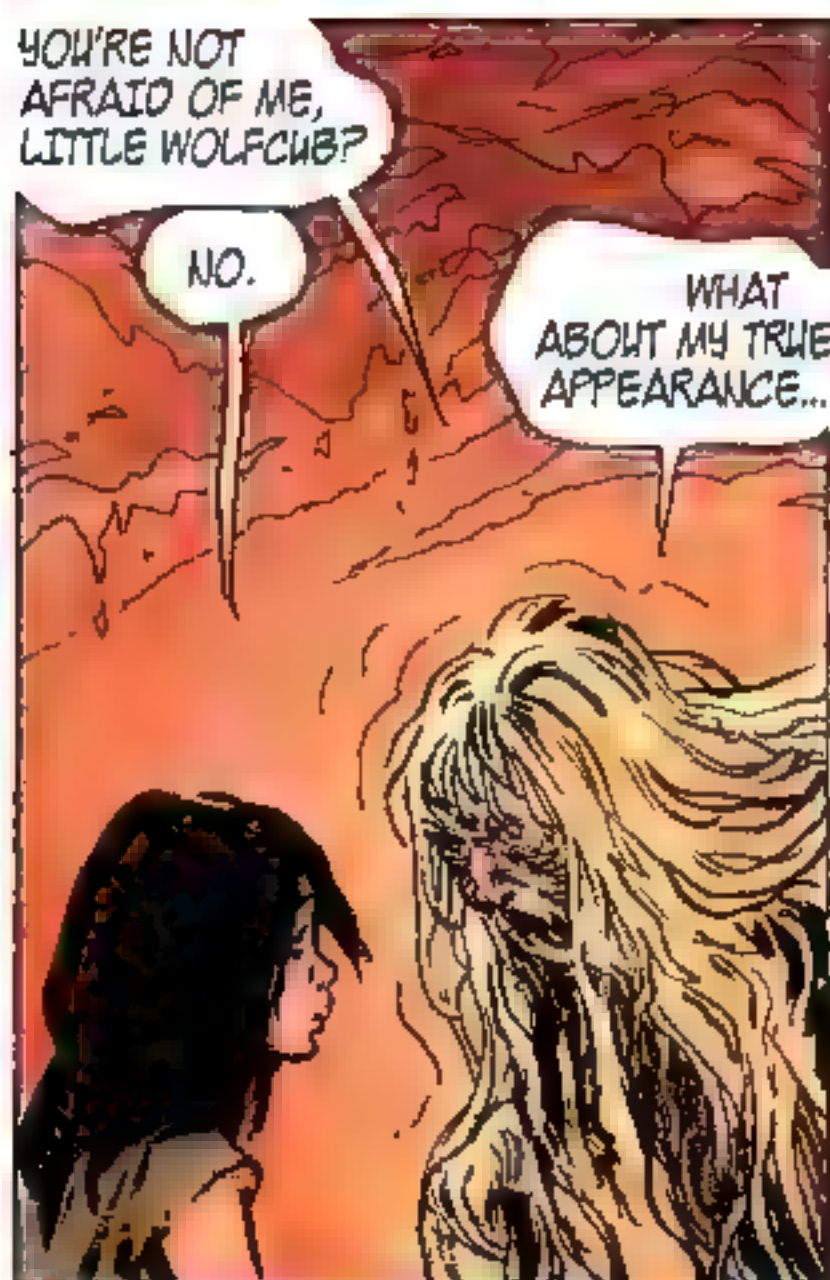
SO, YOU KNEW?

OF COURSE...



YOU TOOK THIS SHAPE SO YOU WOULDN'T SCARE ME, BUT I KNEW IT WAS YOUR STORY YOU TOLD ME.

A CHILD... A PURE-HEARTED CHILD, STILL INNOCENT OF MEN'S SINS...



YOU'RE NOT AFRAID OF ME, LITTLE WOLFCUB?

NO.

WHAT ABOUT MY TRUE APPEARANCE...



...LIKE THIS?

S... STILL NOT.

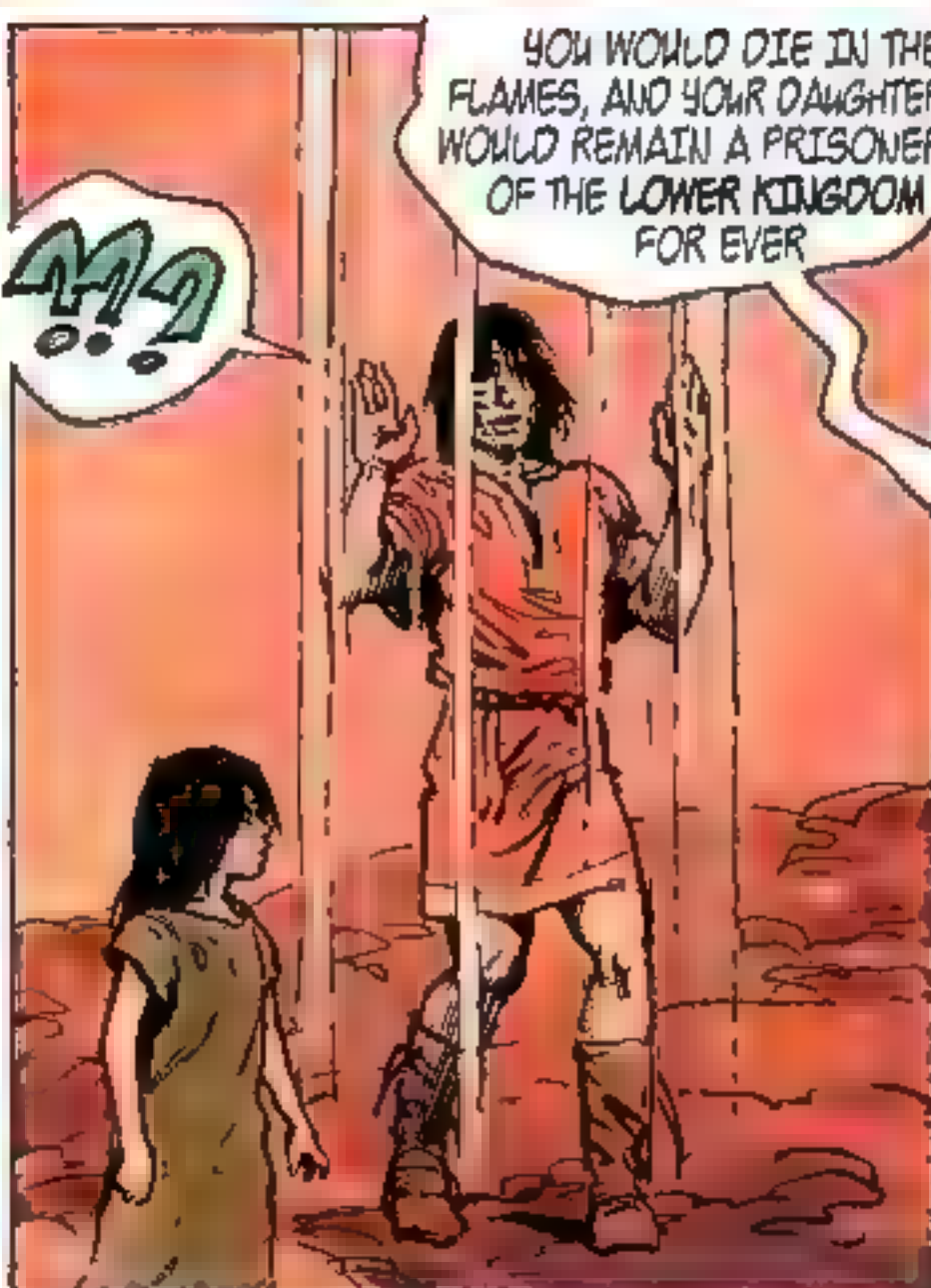


I KNOW IT'S NOT YOUR FAULT. IT'S THE CURSE THAT'S FORCING YOU TO BE EVIL. AND I WANT TO HELP.



NO, NOT WOLFCUB! LEAVE MY DAUGHTER OUT OF THIS, ARACHNEA. I WILL GO AND FETCH THE URN.

YOU'RE BRAVE, THORGAL. BUT WHAT WOULD BE THE POINT?

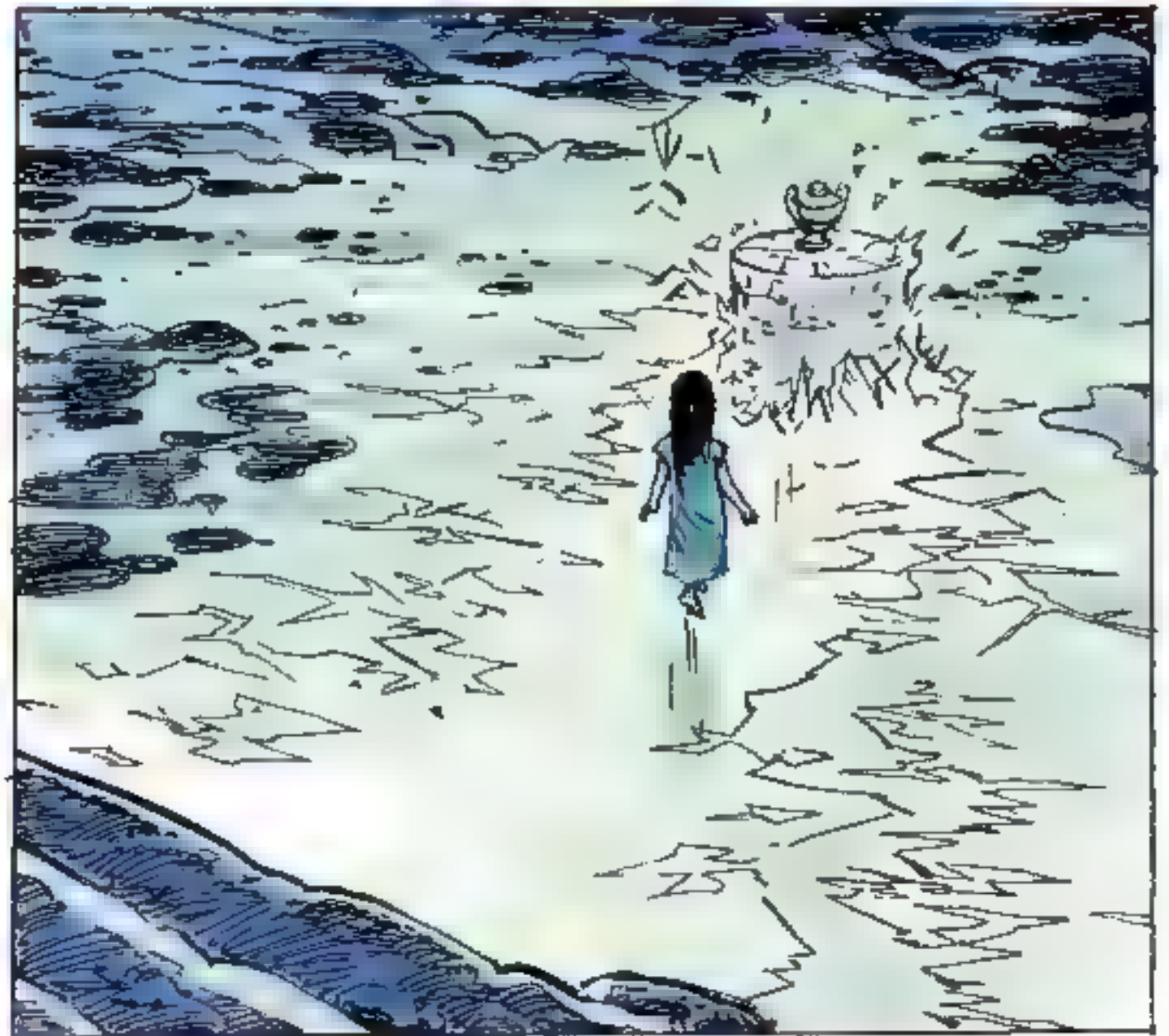
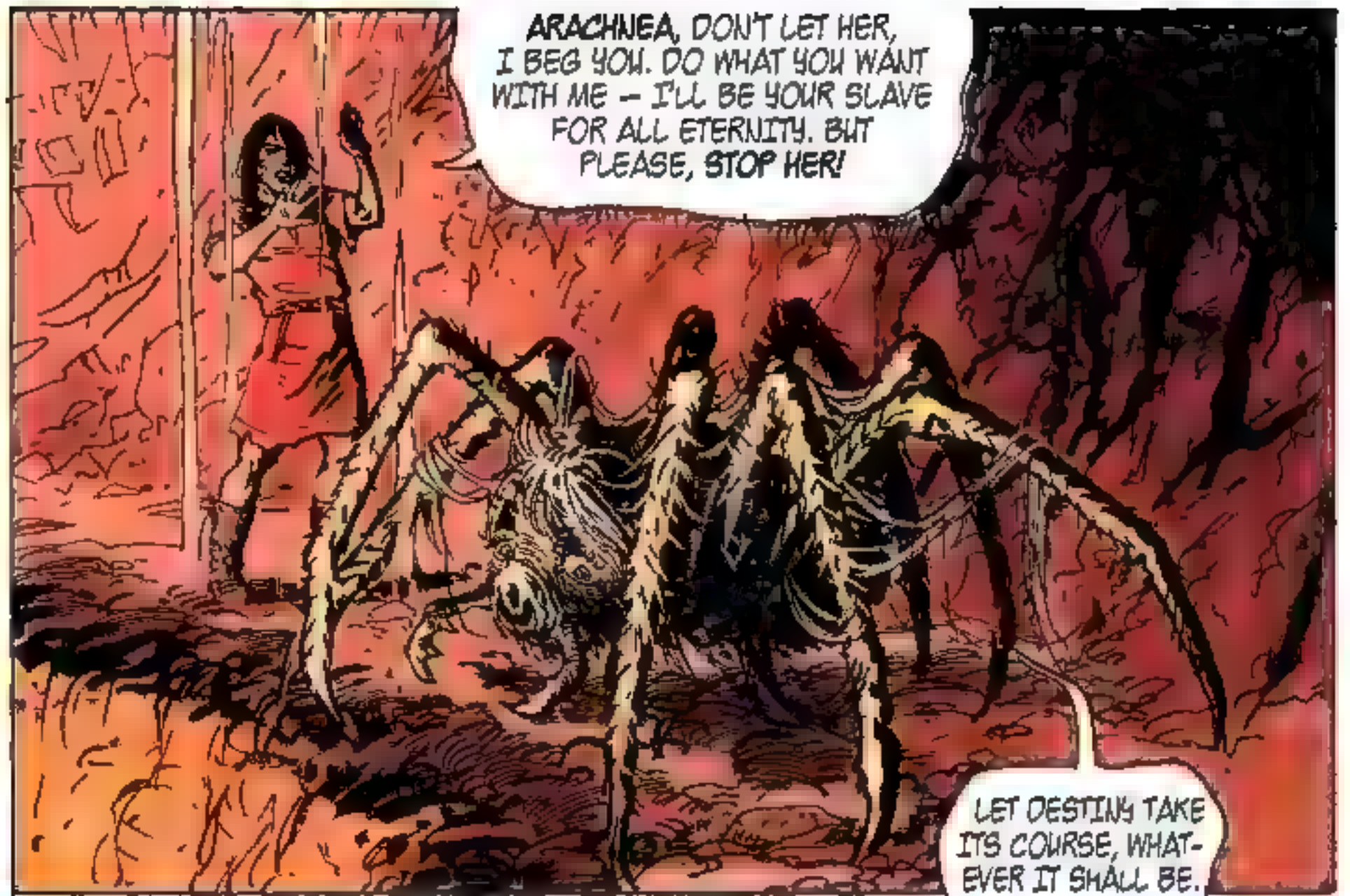


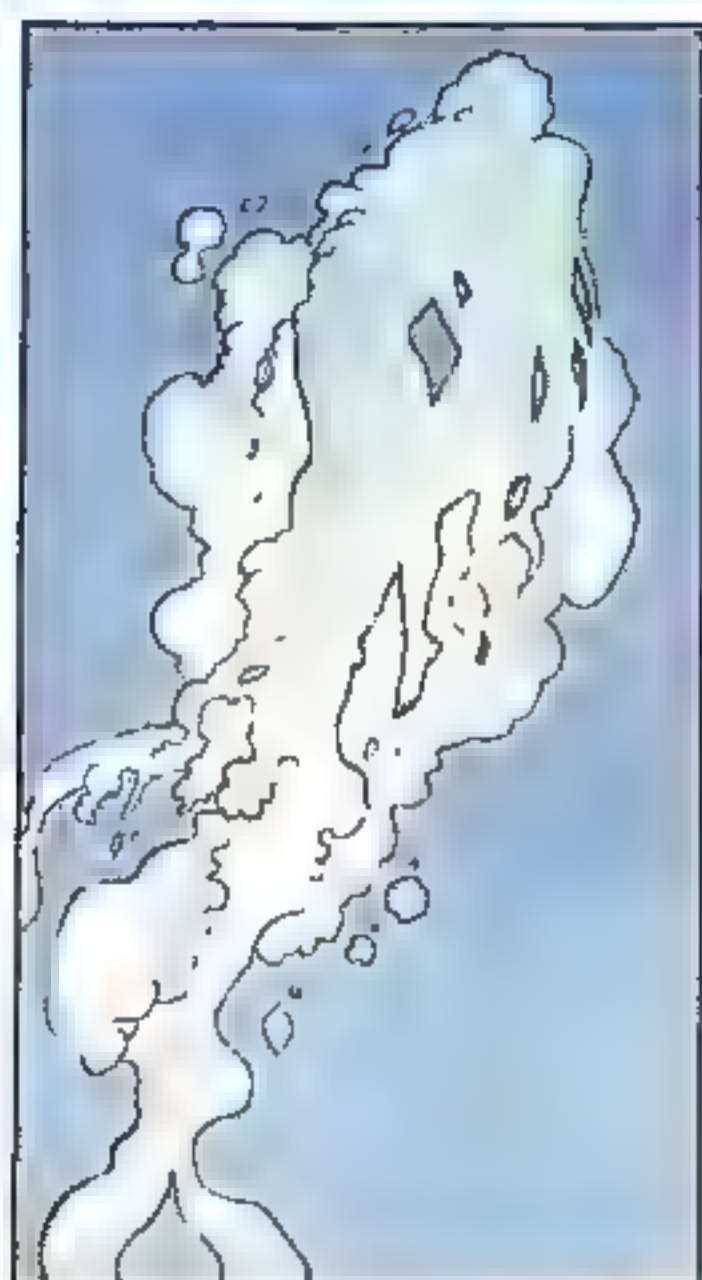
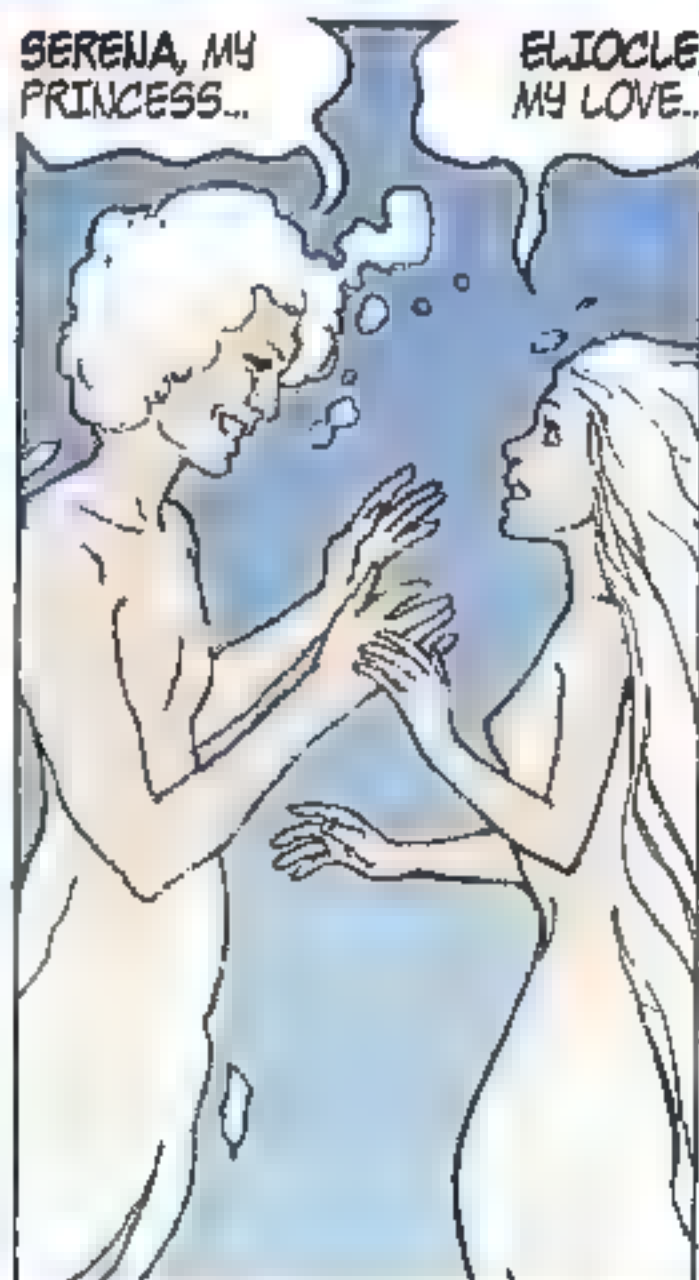
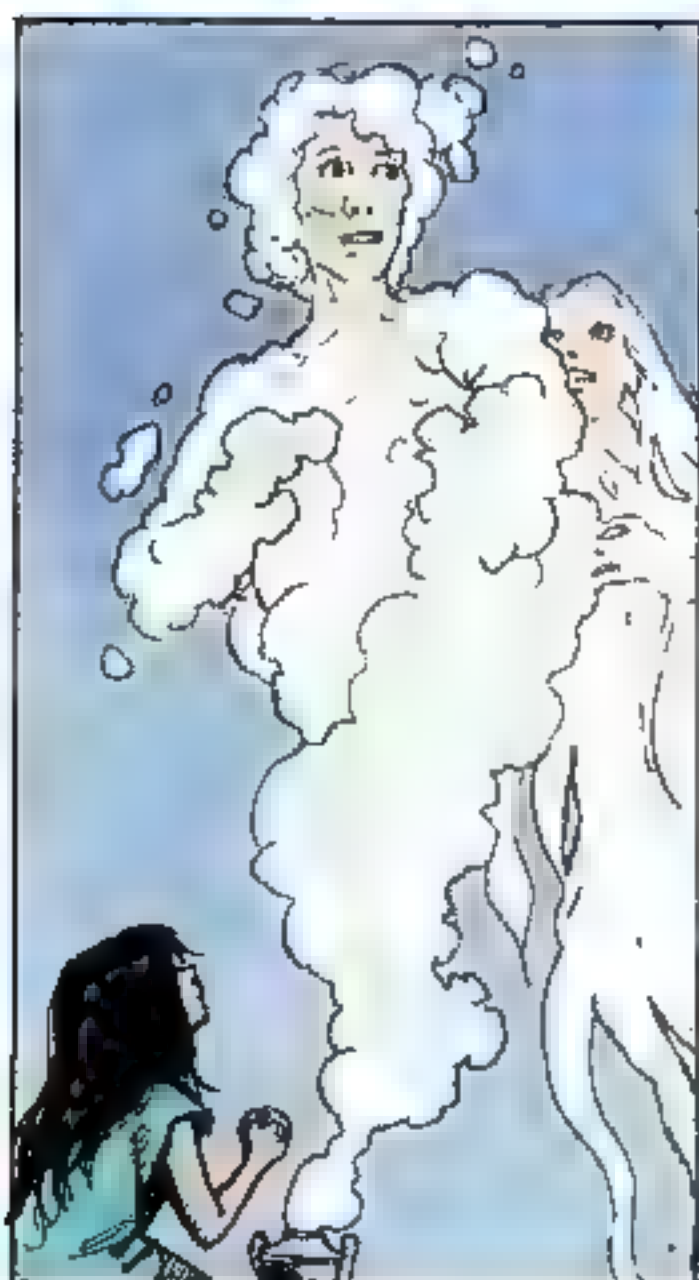
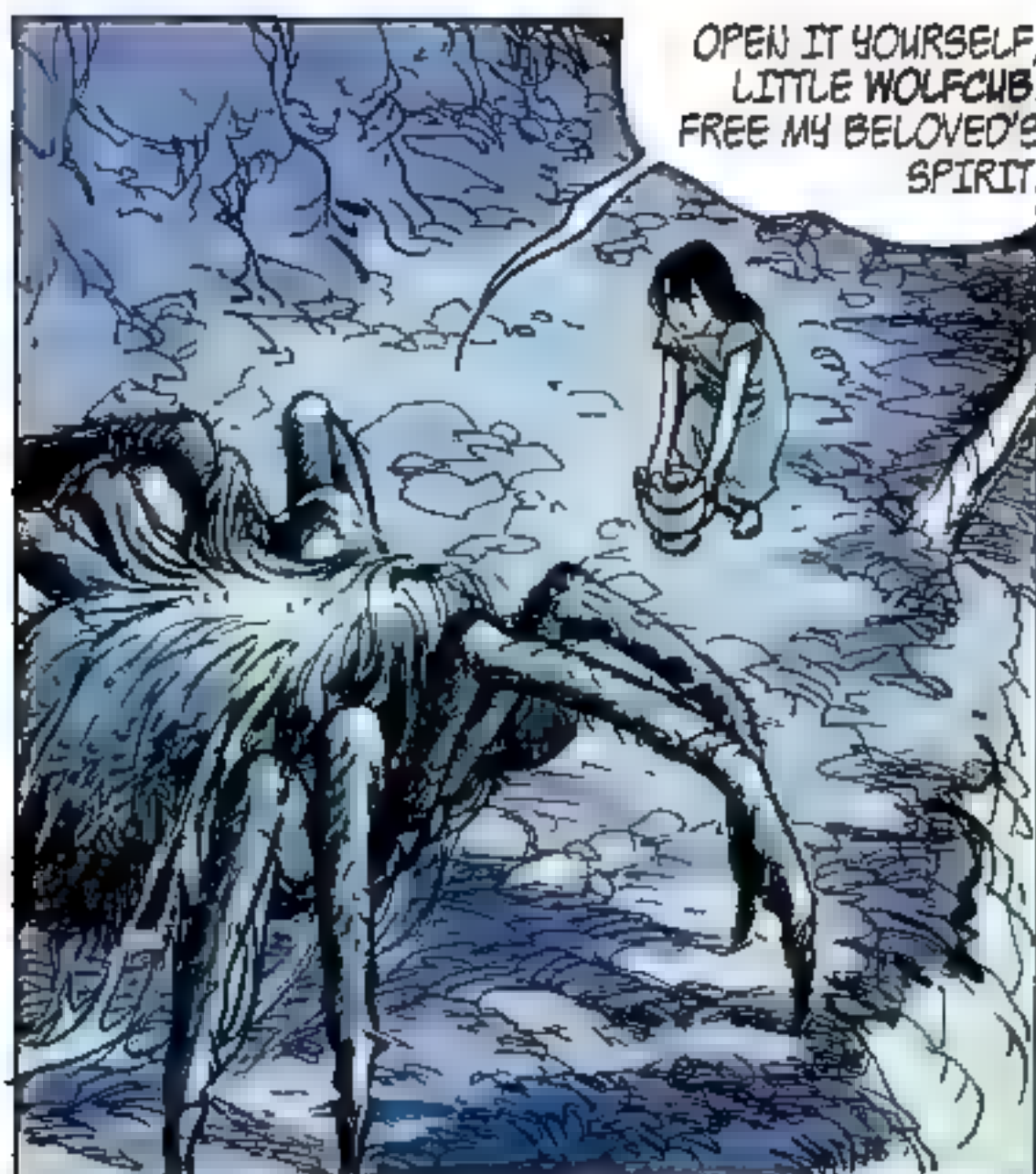
YOU WOULD DIE IN THE FLAMES, AND YOUR DAUGHTER WOULD REMAIN A PRISONER OF THE LOWER KINGDOM, FOR EVER

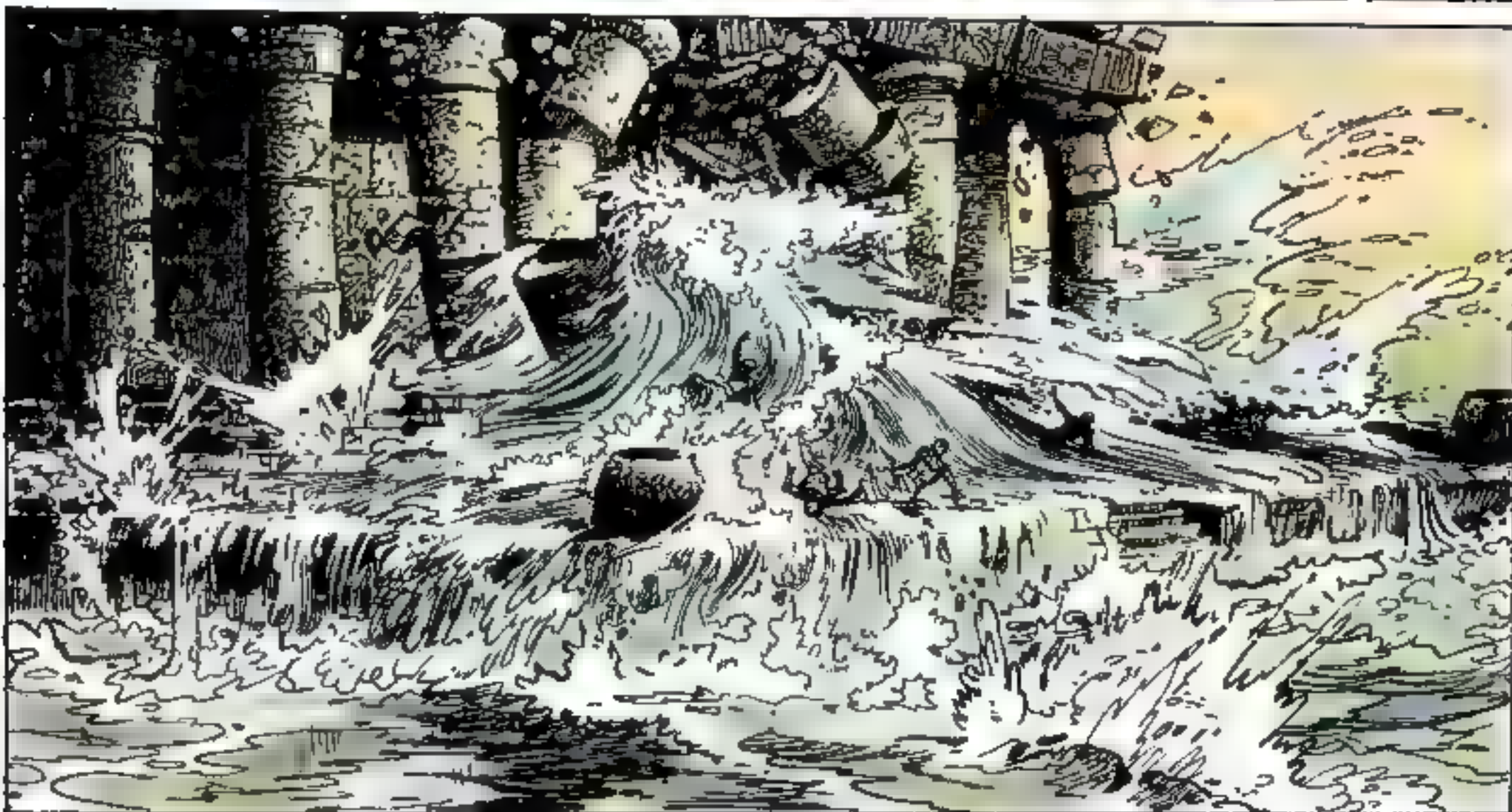
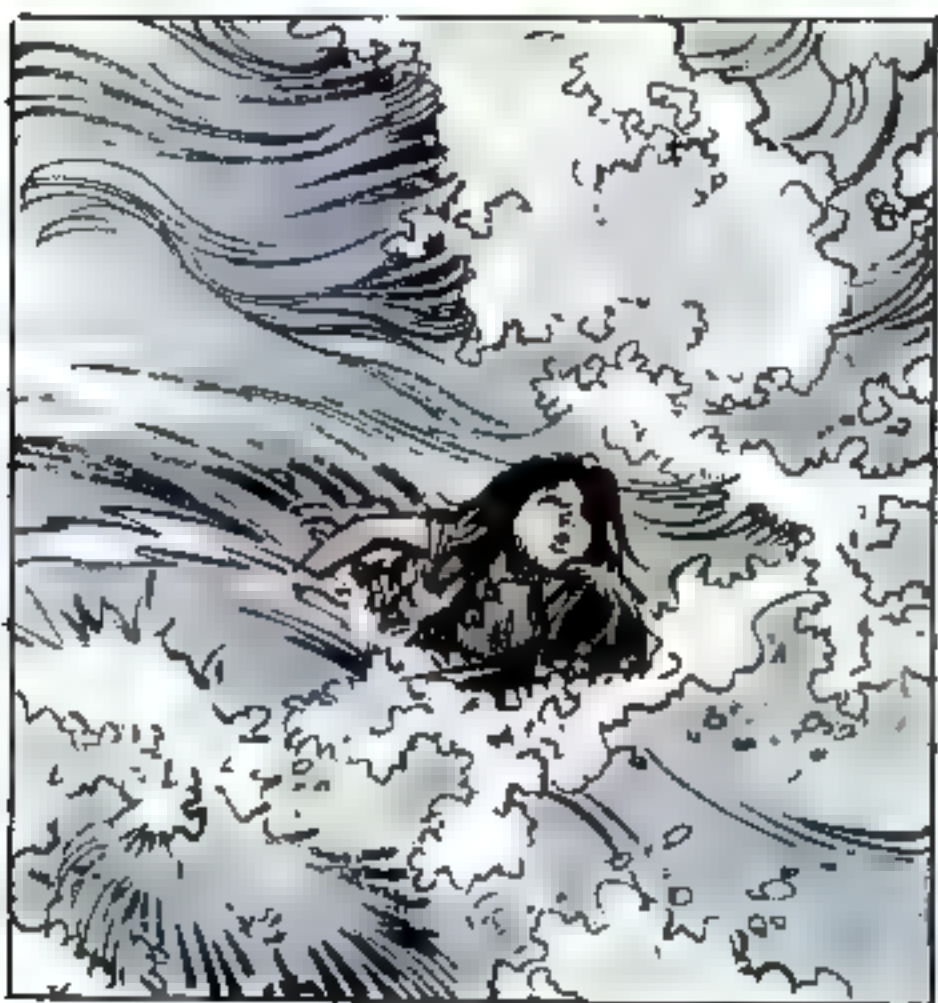
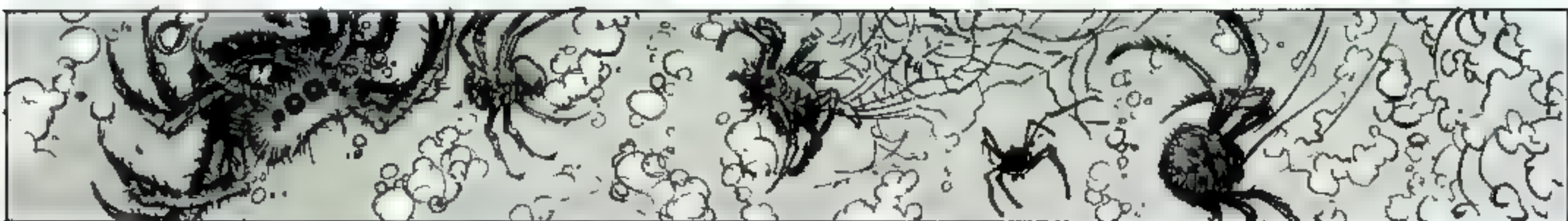
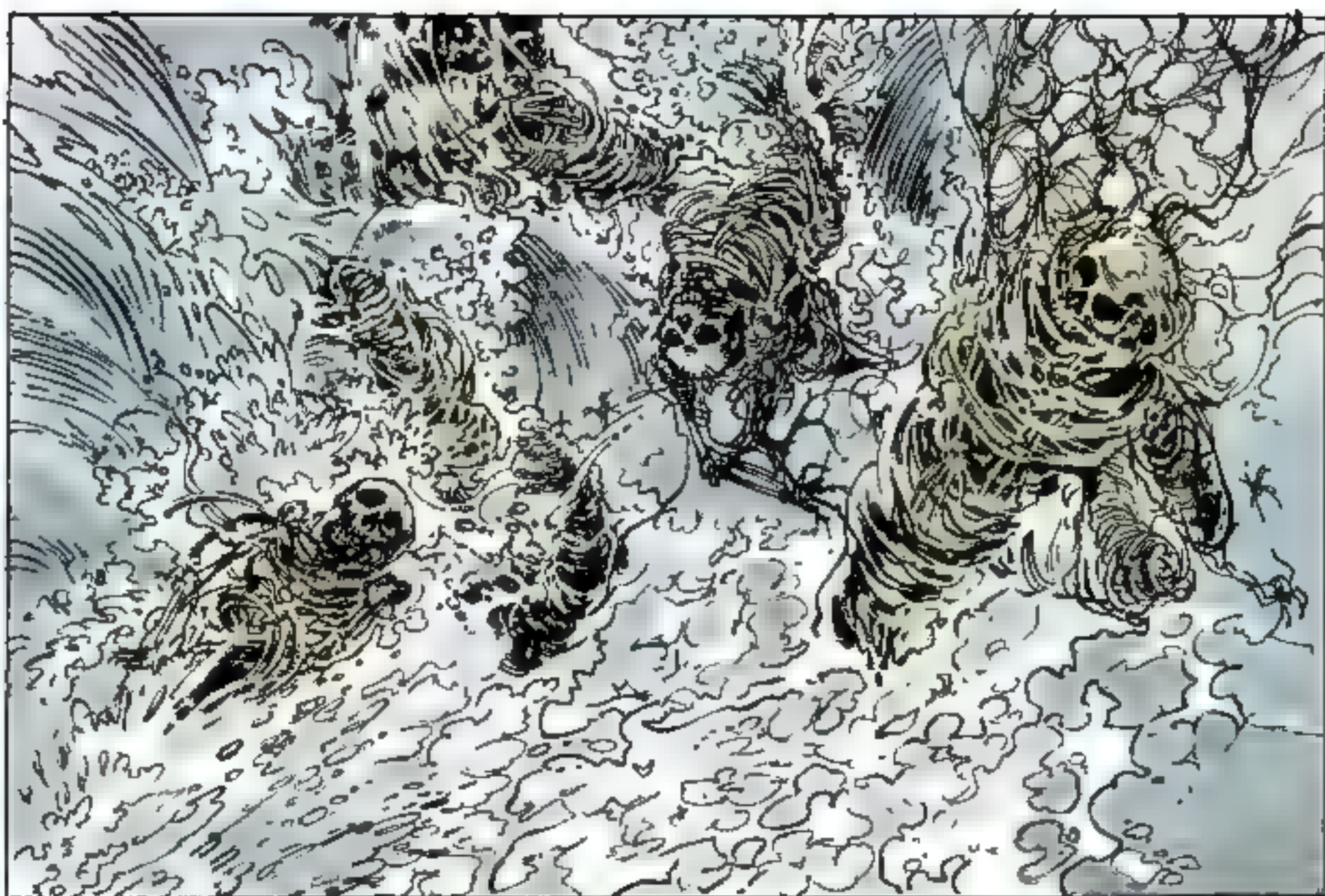
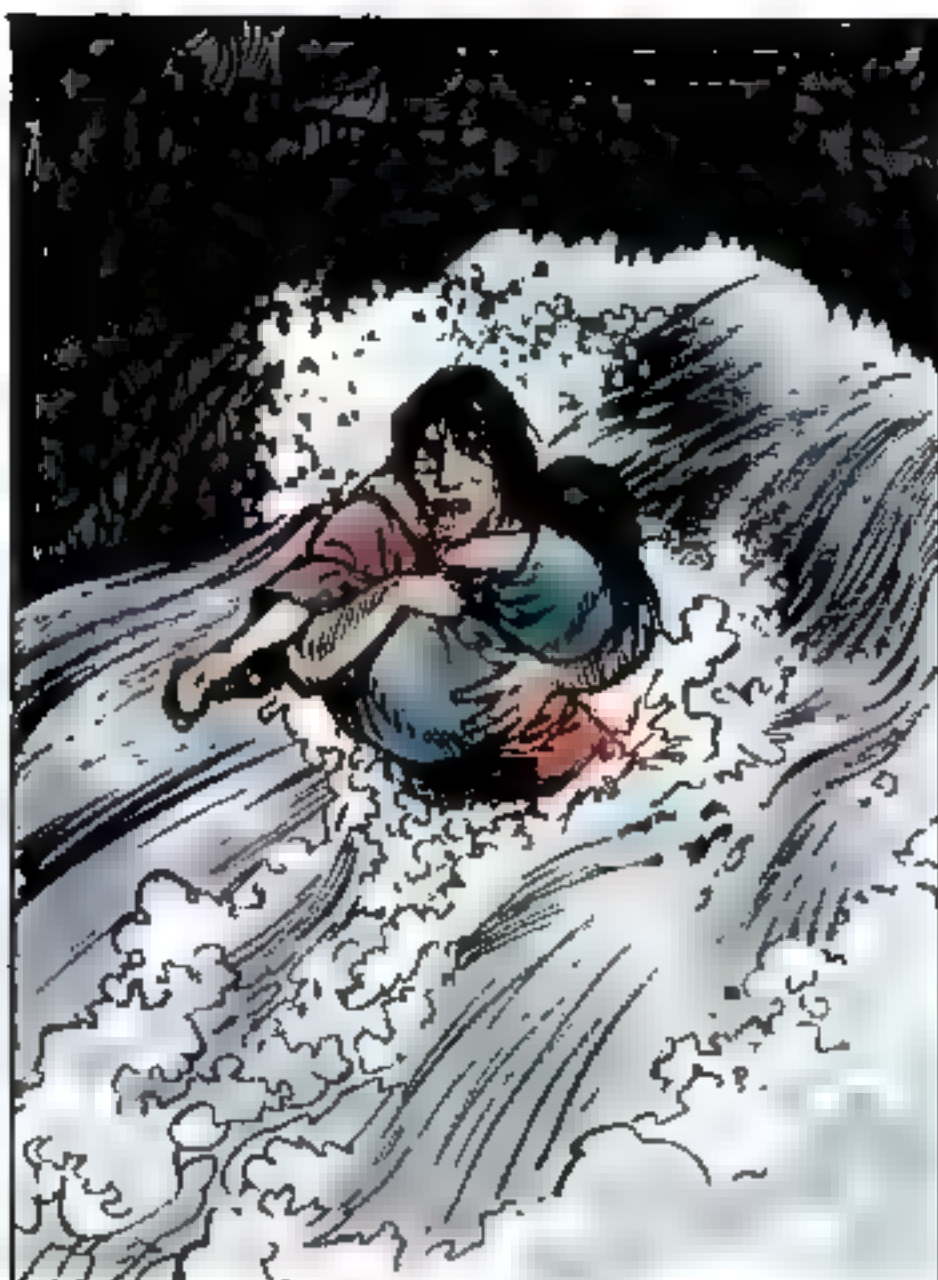
???



WOLFCUB! NO!...









AH, HE'S COMING TO...

WOLF CUB!... WHERE'S WOLF CUB?...



I'M HERE, THORGAL.

OH, SWEETHEART, WHAT A RELIEF! BUT WHAT HAPPENED?

WE DON'T KNOW. WE FOUND YOU THIS MORNING NEAR THE TEMPLE OF ARACHNEA, WHICH WAS DESTROYED BY A CATAclysm.

THERE WAS A GREAT TREMOR, AS IF OUR LAND WAS SINKING INTO THE LOWER KINGDOM, BUT OUR HOUSES REMAINED INTACT. THE HIGH STONE WALLS WERE ENGLUFED, THE MISTS OF NOTHINGNESS DISAPPEARED AND WE SAW THAT BIG STRETCH OF WATER YOU NAME SEA.



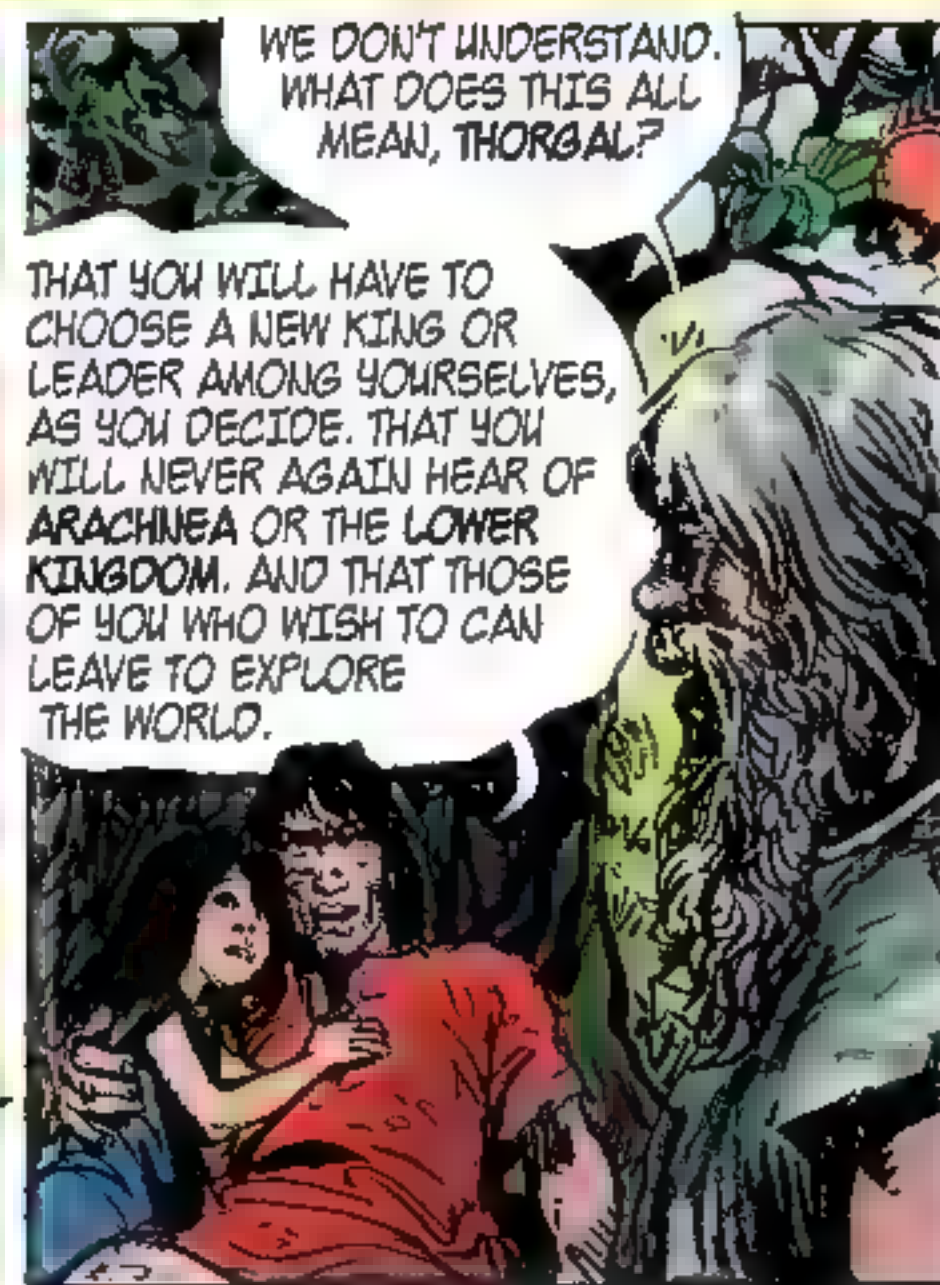
DRACON?

WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT BECAME OF HIM WE FOUND HIS CLOTHES, BUT THEY CONTAINED ONLY A LITTLE DUST AND A TINY DEAD SPIDER.

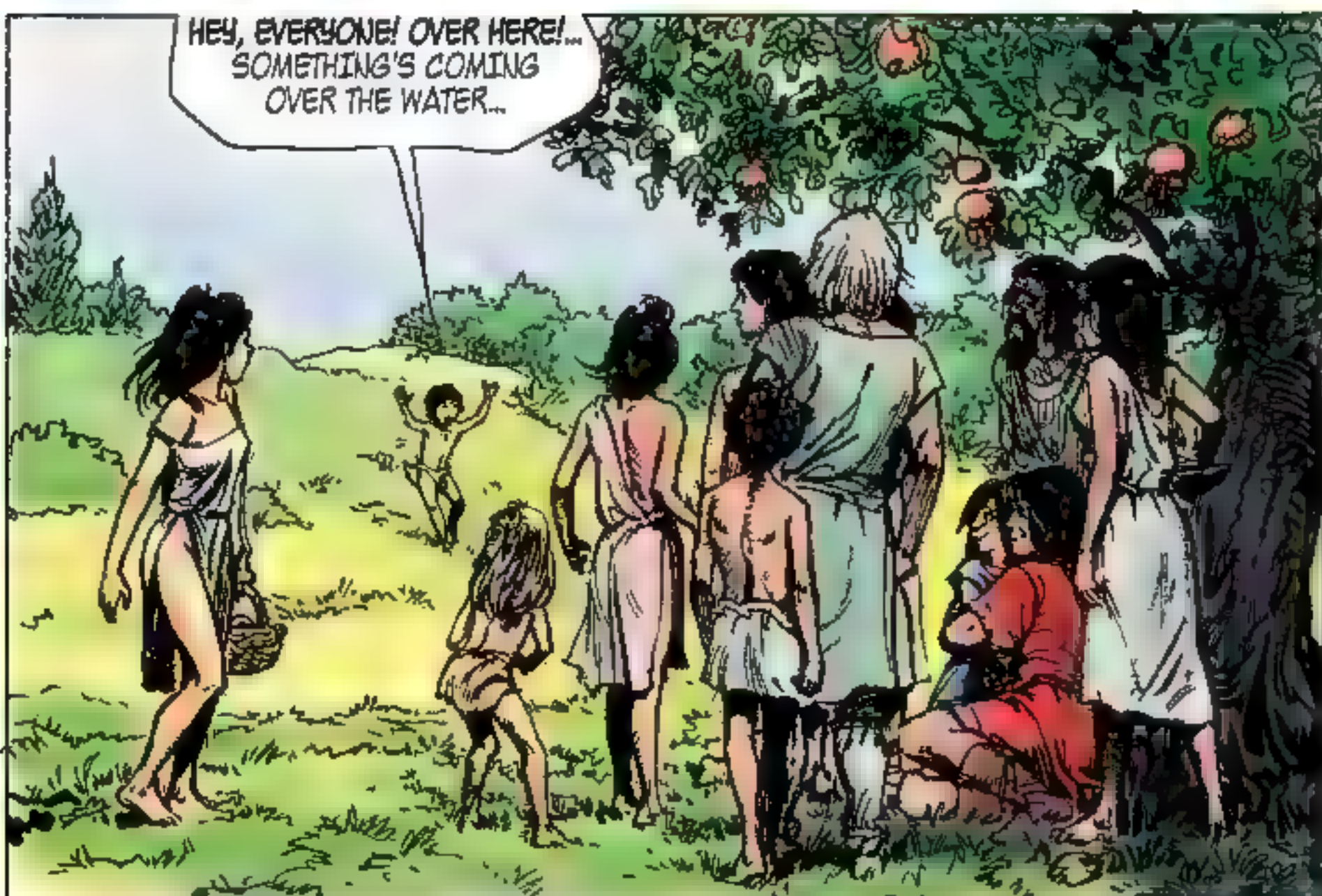


WE DON'T UNDERSTAND. WHAT DOES THIS ALL MEAN, THORGAL?

THAT YOU WILL HAVE TO CHOOSE A NEW KING OR LEADER AMONG YOURSELVES, AS YOU DECIDE. THAT YOU WILL NEVER AGAIN HEAR OF ARACHNEA OR THE LOWER KINGDOM. AND THAT THOSE OF YOU WHO WISH TO CAN LEAVE TO EXPLORE THE WORLD.

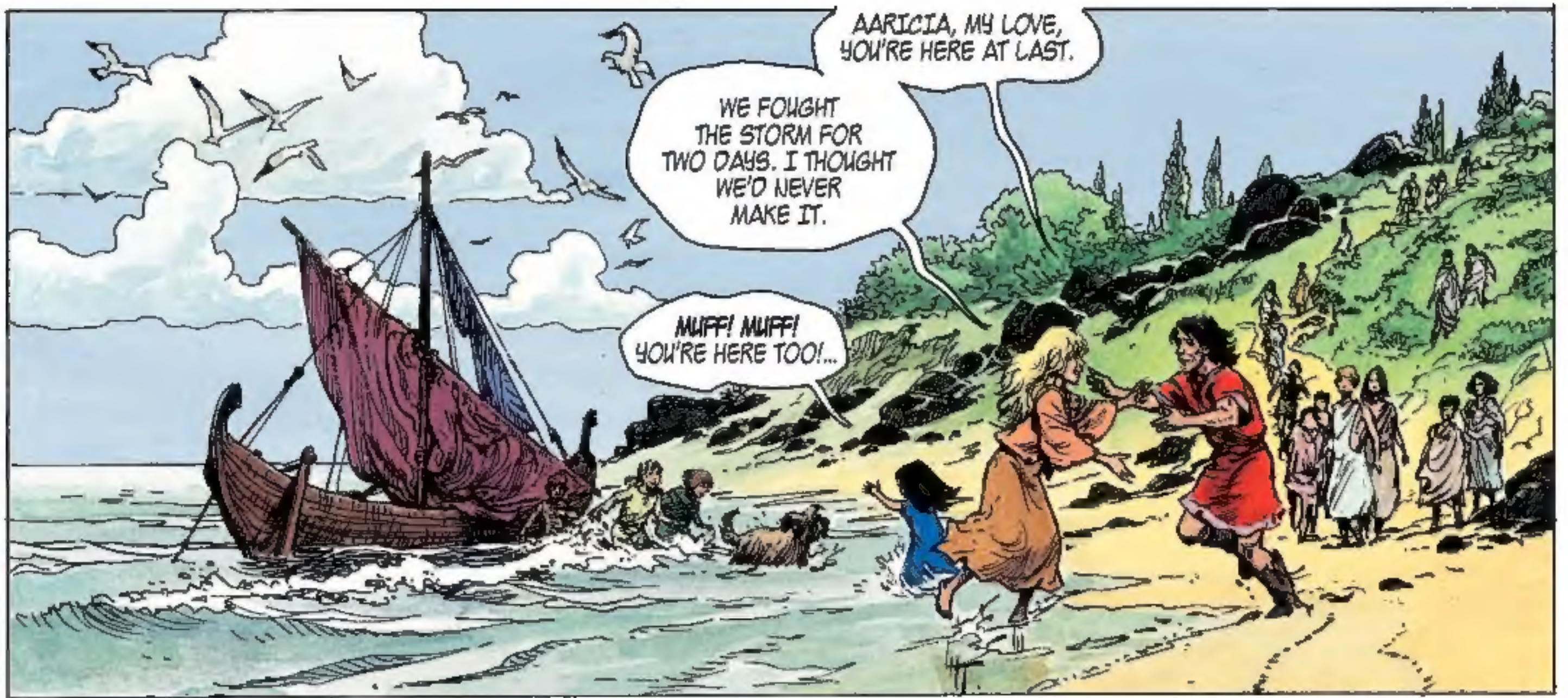


HEY, EVERYONE! OVER HERE!... SOMETHING'S COMING OVER THE WATER...



I THINK THAT'S WHAT THORGAL CALLS A BOAT - AND I SAW A WOMAN, THREE CHILDREN AND A BIG DOG IN IT.





AARICIA, MY LOVE,
YOU'RE HERE AT LAST.

WE FOUGHT
THE STORM FOR
TWO DAYS. I THOUGHT
WE'D NEVER
MAKE IT.

MUFF! MUFF!
YOU'RE HERE TOO!...



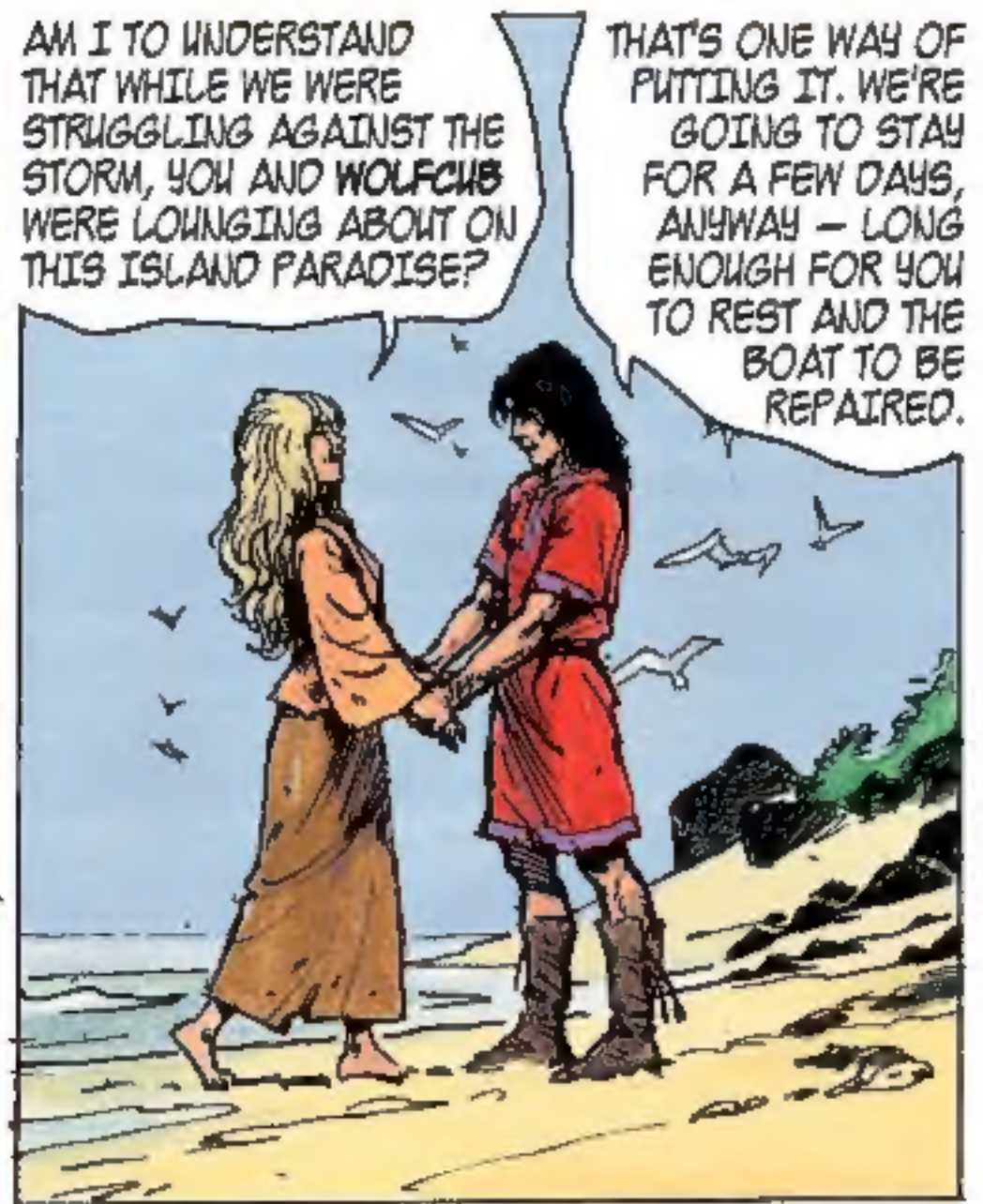
HAVE
YOU BEEN
HERE
LONG?

ALMOST TWO DAYS.
WE HAD A TERRIBLE
ADVENTURE. I'LL TELL
YOU ALL ABOUT IT.



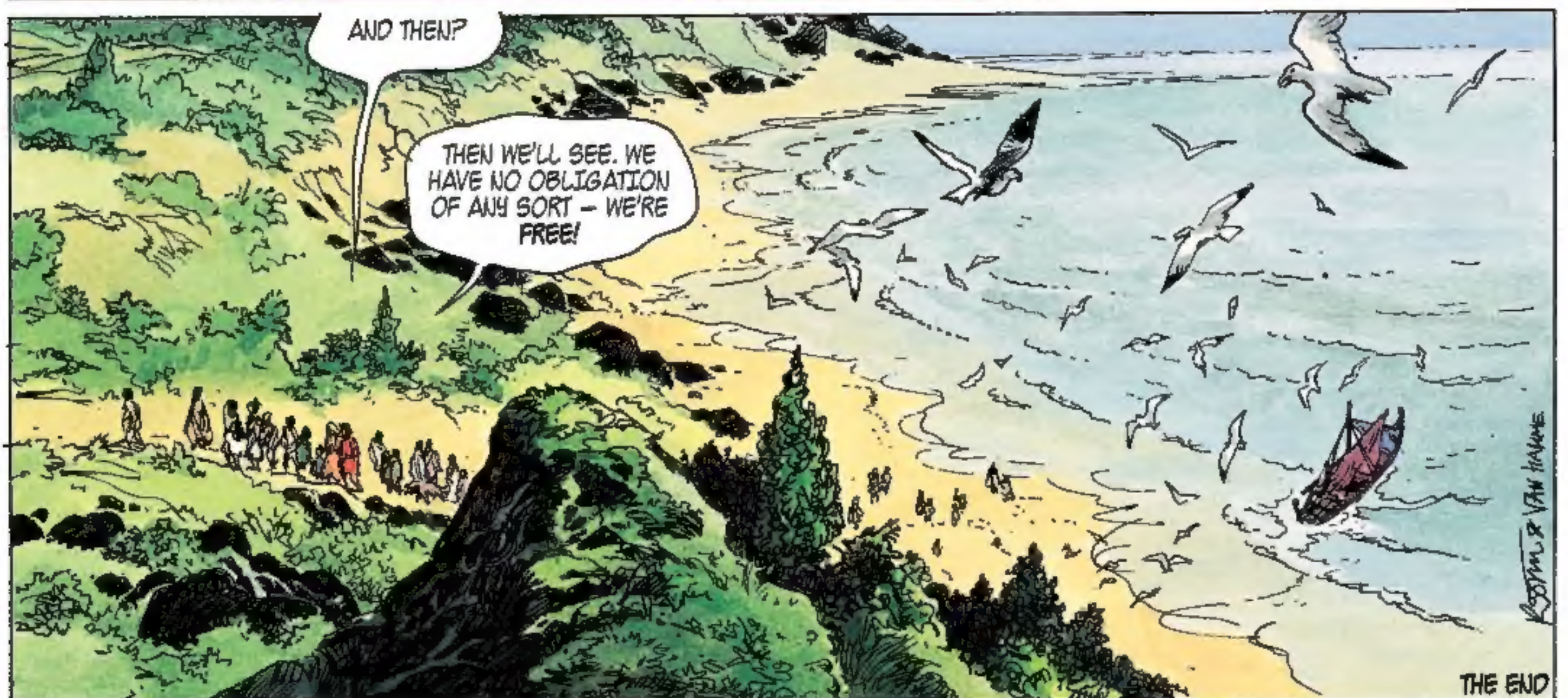
WHO ARE THESE
PEOPLE?

THE ISLAND'S
INHABITANTS. YOU'LL
SEE: THEY'RE VERY HOS-
PITABLE AND GROW
DELICIOUS FRUIT.



AM I TO UNDERSTAND
THAT WHILE WE WERE
STRUGGLING AGAINST THE
STORM, YOU AND WOLFCUB
WERE LOUNGING ABOUT ON
THIS ISLAND PARADISE?

THAT'S ONE WAY OF
PUTTING IT. WE'RE
GOING TO STAY
FOR A FEW DAYS,
ANYWAY - LONG
ENOUGH FOR YOU
TO REST AND THE
BOAT TO BE
REPAIRED.



AND THEN?

THEN WE'LL SEE. WE
HAVE NO OBLIGATION
OF ANY SORT - WE'RE
FREE!

ROBERT & VAN HANDEL

THE END

Original title: Thorgal 24 – Arachnéa

Original edition: © Rosinski & Van Hamme, 1999, Editions du Lombard
(Dargaud-Lombard SA)

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English translation: © 2015 Cinebook Ltd

Translator: Jerome Saincantin

Lettering and text layout: Patrice Leppert

Printed in Spain by EGEDSA

This edition first published in Great Britain in 2015 by
Cinebook Ltd

56 Beech Avenue

Canterbury, Kent

CT4 7TA

www.cinebook.com

A CIP catalogue record for this book
is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-84918-247-8

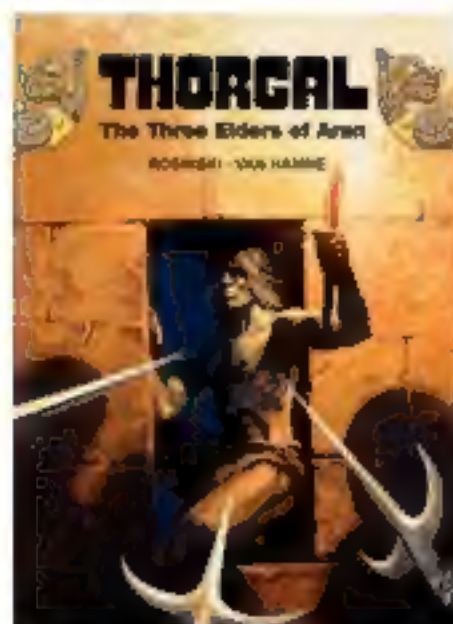


THORGAL

the GODS HAVE PUT A MAN TO THE TEST



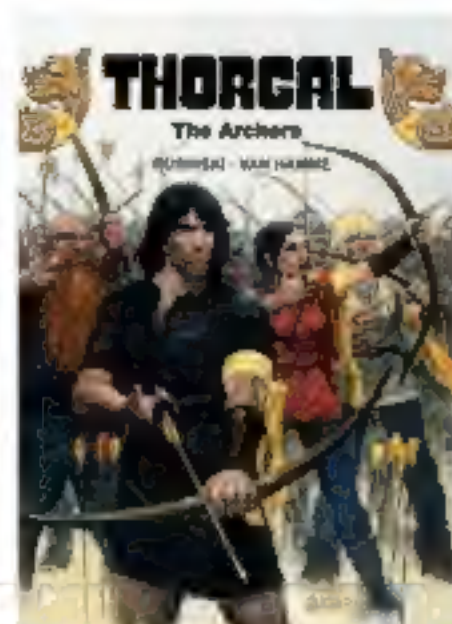
1 Child of the Stars
Incl. Aaricia



2 The Three Elders of Aran
Incl. The Black Galley



3 Beyond the Shadows
Incl. The Fall of Brek Zarith



4 The Archers
Incl. Alinoe



5 The Land of Qa
Incl. The Eyes of Tanatloc



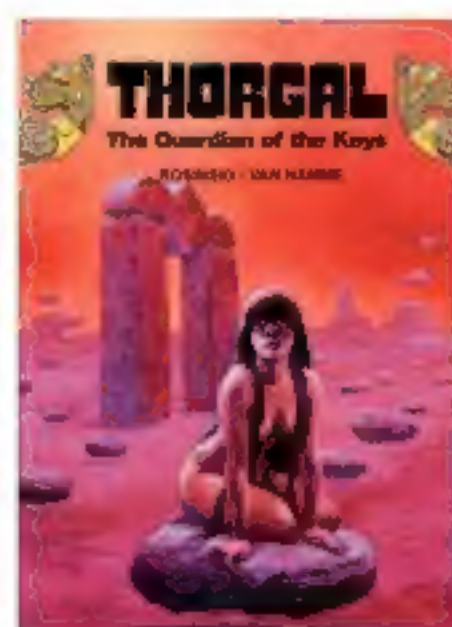
6 City of the Lost God
Incl. Between Earth and Sun



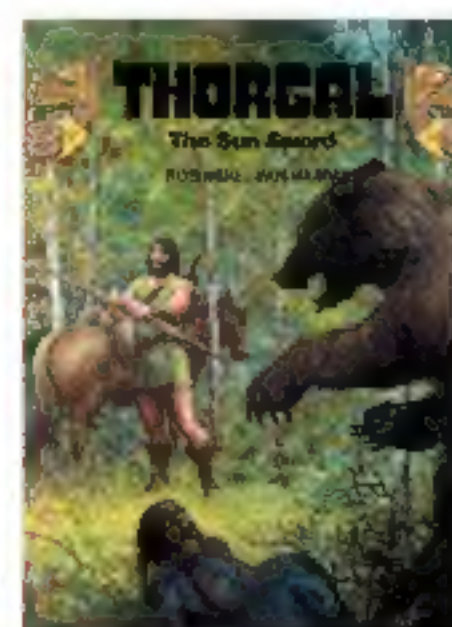
7 The Master of the Mountains



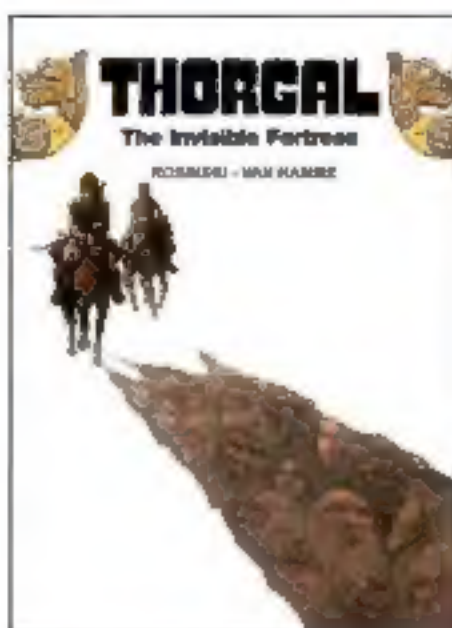
8 Wolf Cub



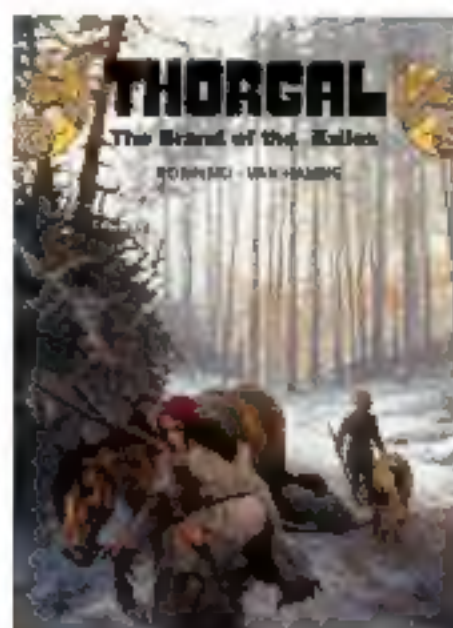
9 The Guardian of the Keys



10 The Sun Sword



11 The Invisible Fortress



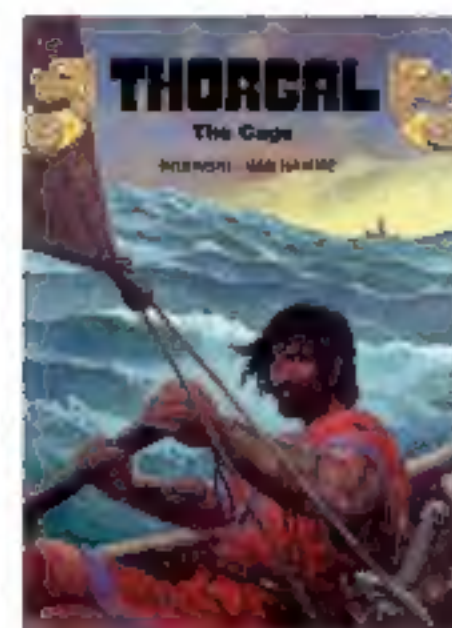
12 The Brand of the Exiles



13 Ogotai's Crown



14 Giants



15 The Cage



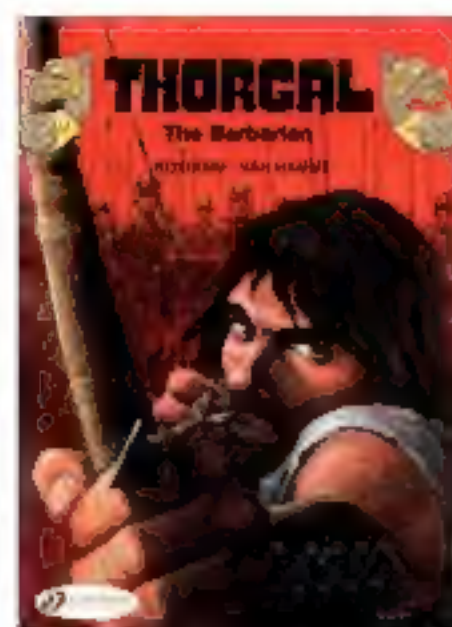
16 Arachnea



17 The Blue Fever



18 The Kingdom Beneath the Sand



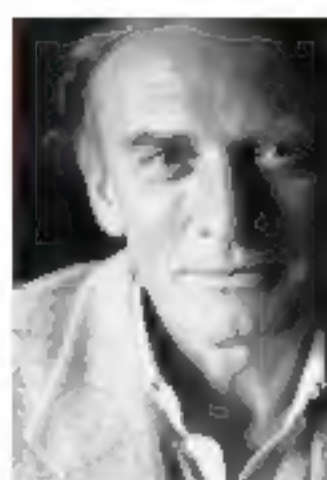
19 The Barbarian



20 Kriss of Valnor



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US \$11.95	ISBN 978-1-84918-247-8		UK £6.99
			US \$11.95
	9 781849 182478		
	www.cinebook.com Ages: 12+		



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